

CLASS STRUGGLE

CS 6 november '79 25 P

ITALY -

**CRISIS OF
LEADERSHIP**

CHURCH & UNIONS

**NUCLEAR
POWER**

NICARAGUA

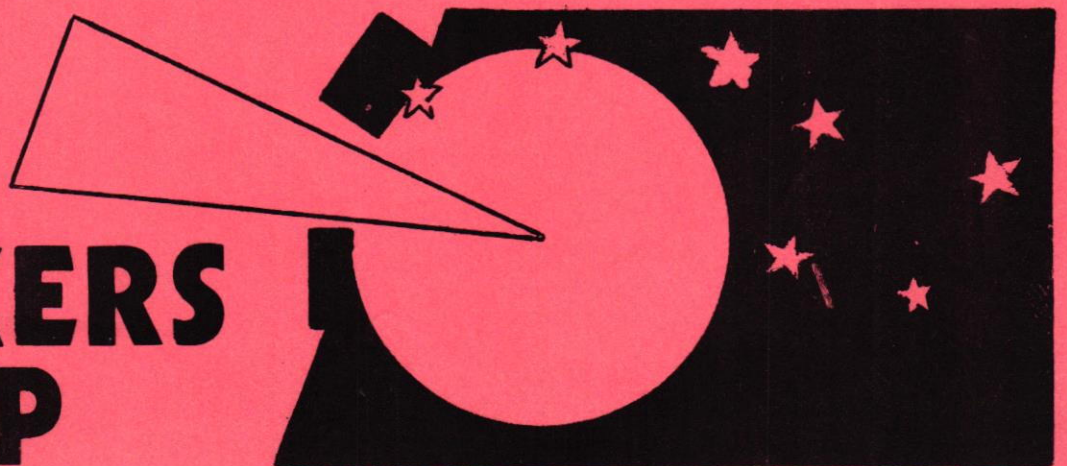
**AN ACID-TEST
FOR TROTSKYISTS.**

**political
status**

**Taxes
Wages
& Jobs**

bolshevism v feminism

**IRISH
WORKERS
GROUP**



BM Adam

CLASS STRUGGLE

JOURNAL OF THE IRISH WORKERS GROUP - No. 6 25 Nov '79

CONTENTS

Taxes, Wages, Jobs -

BUILD THE RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT
AGAINST THE CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE

3

NICARAGUA - AN ACID TEST FOR TROTSKYISTS -
PERMANENT REVOLUTION BETRAYED

12

THE POLITICAL STATUS CAMPAIGN

TWO YEARS AFTER THE COALISLAND CONFERENCE

21

REPLY TO P.D.'s "REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST TENDENCY"

32

Pope and Unions -

FOR LABOUR MOVEMENT INDEPENDENCE OF RELIGION

34

NUCLEAR POWER - FOR A WORKERS FIGHT TO DECIDE

39

ITALY - CRISIS OF REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP

45

FEMINISM VERSUS BOLSHEVISM

Book Review - History of Women's Emancipation in
Russia, Feminism, Nihilism and Bolshevism

57

MCDONALDS: RE-INSTATE JIMMY MACKEN IN ITGWU

56

Correspondence to J.Larkin, 12 Langrishe Place, Dublin 1

In December the IWG will publish a special issue
of Class Struggle on the programme for building
a rank and file movement in the unions.

W E N E E D Y O U R M O N E Y

The Irish Workers Group needs financial support, donations however modest, towards improving the production of its Journal CLASS STRUGGLE.

Cheques or postal orders should be made out to J. Larkin and sent to the address on the previous page.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT IWG
OR CAN HELP IN SPREADING THE SALE OF CLASS STRUGGLE
OR IF YOU WANT TO DISCUSS WITH US ANY OF THE ISSUES
WE RAISE WHY NOT WRITE TO US NOW.

Irish Workers Group originated from a group of revolutionary socialists expelled from the former Socialist Workers Movement (connected to the SWP in Britain) for their opposition to the SWM's growing opportunism and failure to understand the methods of revolutionary Marxism. IWG has published CLASS Struggle since 1977. In 1978 we joined the S.L.P. where we built a broad Workers Alliance to force the Party to implement its policies of active intervention in the struggles of workers, anti-imperialists and women. A balance-sheet of the SLP was Published in Class Struggle no. 5. Expelled from that organisation in March '79 by its reformist leadership with the aid of the centrist Socialist Workers Tendency, the IWG has grown and developed as an independent revolutionary socialist, Trotskyist, group.

A full statement of our major positions is published in 'What We Stand For' in Class Struggle no.5. IWG sets itself the task of fighting for revolutionary socialist regroupment on a principled basis in Ireland and internationally. To this end we are committed to debate and discussion with other groups in Ireland and Internationally.

BUILD A TROTSKYIST REVOLUTIONARY WORKERS PARTY!
FOR A NEW REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL!

BUILD THE RANK & FILE MOVEMENT

AGAINST THE CAPITALIST OFFENSIVE!

By July of this year the recorded number of worker-days of strike action in the 26 Counties had already outstripped all previous annual totals, due to the strike of over 12,000 Post Office workers which began as brief strikes in February but quickly hardened into an all-out battle that lasted till the end of June, finally adding 1.1 million days to the 6-month total. Strike-militancy excluding the POWU battle had by then totalled 200,000 days compared to 280,000 for the first 6 months of 1978.

Yet, despite this and the unprecedented mass demonstrations against the Pay-As-You-Earn tax burden on workers, the trade union Bureaucracy was able by July to impose yet another round of no-strike wage restraint on the working class and to sell us a whole new package of illusions about "partnership" with employers and Government for "economic and social development" - the National Understanding so-called.

The disastrous absence of leadership in the working class which handed such an easy victory to the bosses' agents in the trade union leadership is the central problem confronting revolutionary socialists. In understanding the seriousness of the offensive facing the class and in assessing the strengths, weaknesses and divisions of the Labour Movement, it is important to examine the particular way in which the world crisis of capitalism is developing in Ireland - for the underlying crisis is indeed as profound here as in Britain or internationally, the needs of the bosses are the same - to drive down wages, cut social spending, increase the "reserve army" of unemployed labour in order to bolster falling rates of profit.

At the moment, production and profits continue to enjoy some of the momentum of the temporary resurgence since 1976 which - it should be clear - was made possible by years of wage restraint and the massive shedding of labour (over 40,000 redundancies in the South in 1974/75). Thus the Industrial Development Authority could boast in overseas advertising as recently as September that the Republic offers "the highest return on investment in the Common Market", quoting the U.S. Dept. of Commerce which stated that US investment in Ireland from 1974 to 1977 showed a 28% average annual return (a sizeable sector of industry, employing 24,000 workers in the South) - more than twice the European average. Thus the Republic's gross income per capita, the lowest in the EEC, still means for the bosses that Irish "labour costs" so-called are a basis for continued superprofits. Under threat of EEC restrictions on Irish export-profits tax holidays, the Government has now removed capital taxes and is reducing all company profits taxes to 10% for domestic and foreign. International investment thus continues to flow in, with the cost in state grants per promised job escalating to £20,000 in the recent case of the Mostek micro-chip plant.

State spending to entice transnational investment, to develop sections of native capital and farming, to develop the industrial and training infrastructure, and to meet the costs of growing public-sector wage bills, has added massively to foreign borrowing despite the large amounts of EEC grants acquired since 1973. This has pitched the state into a deepening financial crisis, complicated now by a new surge of inflation, an unprecedented credit squeeze and high interest rates, and new threats to the balance of trade in the loss of parity of the IR£ against the major trading-partner currency - sterling. Compelled to raise direct income tax on wages and salaries (already accounting for 87% of total direct-tax revenue) and facing the most massive opposition to the growth of wage-packet deductions, the state is desperately attempting to hold the line on the public sector wages bill - a proportionately large sector of the working population. Hence the crucial importance of the Post Office strike this year.

Cuts in real wages through the combination of simmering inflation (quite acceptable to the bourgeoisie up till now) and restrictive national wages agreements in '76 and '77, provoked the rank and file into a wave of unofficial and subsequently official strike action which has certainly forced the bosses and state to concede larger money increases in '78 and '79 than they planned (though not compensating for price increases). In this period of struggle the profitable industrial export sector has been able to buy relative industrial peace with some real increases, conceded widespread productivity increases, and increased overtime. Overtime work was exploited to its limits before industry began re-absorbing some of the labour shed in '74 - '75. Public sector wages thus lagged substantially behind. By the beginning of 1979 all the major public sector unions were formulating major wage claims to close the gap, and the level of dissatisfaction among the general unions had built up to the point where the initial terms of the "National Understanding" were overwhelmingly rejected on May 23rd against a background of protests and stoppages by workers against the discriminatory and growing tax imposed directly on them to the benefit of the thriving farmer-capitalist sector.

Between May and September, however, the apparent working class resistance had given way to a retreat. It is in getting behind these events, analysing the lessons and mistakes of this period that revolutionaries can begin to concretise their perspective for the class and more clearly understand the profound need of the organised labour and trade union movement for political answers to the bosses' offensive.

PUBLIC SECTOR MILITANCY

The year began with a strike by busworkers attempting to make up for the large gap between their wages and those of the industrial sector. With massive sympathy behind them the strike was brief and won substantial concessions, although not too brief for the Fianna Fail government to bring in strike-breaking army lorries - an action taken sooner than ever before and at which the Union leadership in general did not even make a verbally convincing protest. The division among the busworkers whereby the two largest general unions, ITGWU and FWUI, left the National Busworkers Union isolated, was a major factor in the failure to win the full demands of the rank and file.

At this point the 12,000-member Civil & Public Services Staff Association, unionising the largest numbers of clerical workers in government departments, had resolved on claims of up to 33 $\frac{1}{3}$ %. The bureaucracy of the union, however, held back in favour of conciliation, delaying until some new form of national pay norm should let them off the hook - this despite the opposition "in principle" of the Union's conferences to National Wages Agreements. Without resorting to the threat of strike action, the CPSSA settled for less than half of its members' claim, nevertheless a substantial gain of up to 17% maximum for its 6,000 clerical assistants. Again however, the sectionalism so deeply rooted in the union movement can be clearly seen in the CPSSA's holding back right through the period of both the bus strike and then the most prolonged and bitter strike by a civil service union - the POWU. With a public-sector willingness to fight already evident from the busworkers, with the teacher unions (adding up to 30,000 members) threatening to claim for up to 40%, with the IPOEU still in a militant mood after a long-running productivity battle, what could have been more necessary for the whole class than the fight to bring all public sector claims forward. Only such a perspective could have armed the rank and file in the public sector to confront the government and win. That the organisational form for such a fight had to be a public sector rank and file alliance of shop stewards is confirmed a hundred times over by the treachery of the public sector union bureaucrats.

Thus the CPSSA held back on their claim, as did the teachers, surrounded by a sea of POWU pickets, in the comfortable knowledge that the massive sacrifices of the POWU would stretch the government's wage norms just enough to sell a deal to their members. Instinctively, they knew that the alternatives of joining with the POWU and calling for widespread trade union solidarity would unleash a confrontation that the broker misleaders of the unions could not so easily turn off to preserve their own position.

The business of isolating the militant POWU, however, was not left to the public sector unions. Patrick Cardiff, leader of the FWUI, played a key role in the Congress of Trade Unions Executive in its threat to expel the POWU for breaching the 'no-strike' 1978 Wage Agreement which was to expire in April. Ultimately grateful for the POWU's refusal to accept the Congress' letter, and thus spared any confrontation, Cardiff led the team of so-called "mediators" which worked secretly with the POWU leaders to sell a shoddy deal to the rank and file while starving them of all but the most token solidarity gestures such as once-off collections at union conferences. The Congress "mediators" role in this case as bosses' agents is all the more transparent in that they allowed the P&T Minister Faulkner to get away with refusing to meet the POWU at all.

The other unions stood looking on while the POWU members starved, while their wives marched the streets in protest, and while mass pickets at the CIE Fastrack depot were batoned by even larger gangs of police. The disorganisation of the POWU strike itself left control in the hands of the union bureaucrats. In the main centre, Dublin, there were no rank and file strike committees apart from the limp and largely rhetorical Outdoor Postworkers Committee. There were no regular meetings of strikers to prise open the secret

negotiations or to co-ordinate blacking, organise solidarity and demand sympathetic action from the IPOEU which cynically boasted its willingness to bring out the Telex service workers etc. "if requested". Thus, no genuine rank and file organs were created in the POWU capable of calling out those IPOEU rank and file sections who were willing to respond - and did briefly in some depots - to back their fellow Post Office workers.

Systematic collections throughout the unions were never more than a fraction of the financial help which the POWU got from fellow continental unions - and not surprisingly, given a climate in which the Dublin Trades Council (so beloved of the centrists and the reformist Militant group, SFWP and CP) agreed to back a solidarity demonstration only after four months and then called it off at 24 hours notice at the request of the POWU leaders who in turn were requested by the Congress "mediators" who then successfully concluded Faulkner's work without him having to dirty his hands with direct negotiations. The failure of the Outdoor Committee to press ahead with the demonstration on Saturday 23rd June, when contingents of workers were organised to travel from the provinces, was an astonishing capitulation to the pleas not to "upset the delicate negotiations". By the following Monday the POWU leaders had settled for precious little more than the Government's original offer, winning 15% for postworkers and telephonists and 12% for clerks. The attempt of the clerks to resist inevitably crumbled in these circumstances.

The nature of the Outdoor Committee which did certainly act as the focus for militants to make the strike solid as against token stoppages, is an object lesson in the defects of rank-and-fileist ideas of "opposition" or vague "class struggle tendency" groups - even at their best. A revolutionary perspective for a genuine rank and file movement would have put to the fore the class-wide answers of solidarity - to bring all public sector claims forward, to build the public sector shop-stewards alliance, to force the Trades Council and Labour Party branches to mobilise solidarity, to fight for sympathetic stoppages, and above all, to warn at every point against the danger of sellouts by the bureaucrats and put the control of the strike and negotiations in the hands of mass meetings of the rank and file and their elected recallable delegates.

THE LEFT AND THE POST OFFICE STRIKE

The Socialist Labour Party had adopted in January a formally correct policy to fight for the building of a shop stewards conference, although the Peoples Democracy members in the SLP were unhappy that it didn't win support for its "class struggle tendency" perspective (so-called) which would have implied an uncritical alliance with union leaders rhetorically committed to struggle. After the expulsion of the IWG from SLP for its insistence on a clear stand in support of the H-Block Political Status demand, we nevertheless were directly instrumental in getting a second conference of about 60 militants after the SLP had botched the organisation of the first meeting and wanted to give up the project. This new meeting, held straight after the third round of tax protests - the May Day strike in Dublin - and in the run up to balloting on the terms of the National Understanding, this meeting was favourably timed to relate to major issues and struggles. However, the shadow of a 'committee' which emerged from the meeting under an SLP/SWT convenor, did nothing! Not even leaflets were produced on the crucial National Understanding ballot. Worst of all, the POWU strike became an excuse for not

calling another meeting until July 14th, three weeks after the POWU strike finished when at last the organisers could notify the meeting by post! Believing from one day to the next that the Post Office strike would be over within days - precisely the illusion that the Congress mediators worked very hard to create as an instrument of deliberate demoralisation, the SWT argued against making it an issue for the after-May-Day meeting even though the leader of the Outdoor Committee had offered to sponsor it. Thus, for a further 6 weeks, the POWU picketers continued to tramp the picket lines and were batoned by police while the Left organised no solidarity, particularly the SWT which held the reins of the 'committee' as a tendency in the largest grouping, the SLP which claimed up to 100 members in Dublin. The Peoples Democracy members under the name of 'Republican Socialist Tendency' in the SLP had quietly left that party between the May and July meetings; - at their public meeting (see our comments in this issue) they claimed that they were unable to attend the two previous meetings for a shop-steward's conference but still managed not to attend the July meeting in the CIE Hall.

The eventual outcome was that another committee was formed and is now, in vastly more unfavourable circumstances, attempting to build for a shop-stewards conference. In a trade union movement where the power of the Bureaucracy is such as to prevent sections or branches openly affiliating as such to any labour movement campaign, not to speak of sending delegates to an unofficial shop-stewards body, the lost opportunity of building a campaign on an organised body of strikers desperate for solidarity - and equally keen to give it as in the Mc Donalds strike - was doubly disastrous. The centrist timidity of the SWT, PD & SLP was every bit as bad as the Militant group. (a so-called trotskyist tendency degenerated into reformism within the Labour Party). These latter rhetorical militants, despite some implantation among the Postal Workers, did nothing to fight for solidarity from other workers, nothing to warn against reliance on union leaders, nothing to place demands on the Labour Party or official trade union organs.

RESULTS OF THE POWU SETBACK

The overall effect of the POWU strike was dramatic. Throughout the unions, the mood was - "look at the Post Office workers - what did they gain after four months on the street?" Thus, barely a month after this setback for the class, and two months after the rejection of a new national agreement, the Bureaucracy had successfully laid the basis for a new agreement on the temporary ruin of working class morale. For, they knew as well as anybody that the alternative to the straitjacket of a 'no-strike' wage agreement was what they cynically labelled a "free-for-all", i.e. reliance on the independent industrial action of the rank and file themselves. That they should succeed by July 25th in winning a remarkable majority (297 to 135) for an almost identical national understanding (after yet a third round of talks-without-a-mandate), despite the massive protests against the crushing tax burden, and despite a new surge of inflation in prices in the interim, is a measure of the power of the Irish trade union bureaucracy faced with a rank and file lacking adequate answers.

The FWUI, for example, having got a majority for the first set of terms in May, after wrongly telling its members that Congress was recommending the deal (it hadn't been able to agree), refused to allow a new ballot on the revised terms. Balloting generally was by secret vote in the majority of unions, and few unions had any workplace debate on the issue. But the weapons of the union leadership were

not merely its bureaucratic curtailment of rank and file democracy but also, as we have shown, a deliberate cultivation of sectionalism (to which it counterposes its false 'unity' of class-collaborationist centralised bargaining) and also the powerful appeal of the reformist ideology that they espouse. For, their loudest praise of the National Understanding was an appeal to its "progressive" role as a means of social reform on unemployment, health and social welfare etc. through social partnership, reforms which even if fully implemented are certainly paltry and less than what a mobilised labour movement could win.

Full support to every section breaking through the wage agreements, such as the Dock workers strike tried to do, and for every catch-up claim is an essential starting point for every attempt to build a rank and file movement equipped with class-wide revolutionary answers to the capitalist offensive. But such answers must go far beyond the sectionalism of any single wage struggle however militant, such as the oil workers, for they must be a means of unifying the class, defending against redundancy and closures, and blocking the ability of inflation to wipe out every gain - by fighting for the sliding scale of wages. Such answers must centrally aim to transform the labour movement into a democratic fighting organisation on a war-footing against capitalism. That is the fundamental conception in the "Programme for the Rank and File Movement" which we are publishing in the forthcoming Class Struggle Special.

The National Understanding now in operation from May '79 to Aug 1980 gives 9% for 9 months (minimum £5.50) and 2% for 6 months, plus an expected 5% for the minimum expected price rise in the calendar year 1979, i.e. cleverly based on the period from mid Nov. '78 to Mid Nov. '79. An average $\frac{1}{4}$ % extra will be given for each 1% rise in prices over 12% prior to Nov. this year. But inflation will have totalled 19% or more over the full 15 months of the agreement. Thus workers will have received about 17% gross or 13% net take-home compensation for price rises of 19% - i.e. if the employer doesn't use the 'inability to pay' loophole. That's a wage cut in anyone's language, notwithstanding the catch-up claims and anomaly awards fought for by some sections after several years of effective wage cutting.

The imposition of this package was accelerated by the government's threat of a unilateral ceiling on wage rises. The Congress, true to their broker role, were easy victims of this bait and flung themselves into the arms of the Federation of Employers when the latter came up with an additional pittance to let the ITGWU leaders off the hook of their own fake intransigence.

The fight against wage restraint, and in particular against this 'national understanding', which commits the Bureaucracy to more elaborate embroilment in joint committees with the bosses and government, poses all the more sharply the need to oppose all forms of class collaboration. Centrally, this means opposition to any reliance on the Labour Court, an organ of collaboration with the bosses which is currently under attack but which the bureaucracy is desperately trying to redeem by "reforms" such as the newly announced addition of another department to speed up claims. As a key weapon in the hands of the bourgeoisie and their agents in the union bureaucracy, the Labour Court was successfully used to cut across the Dock strike, using its unilateral powers to intervene. In 1980, however, Fianna Fail will very likely make Labour Court hearings compulsory in a wide range of disputes - tilting the power of bargaining even further away from the shop floor into the hands of union officials.

TAXATION REFORM CAMPAIGN AND REDUNDANCY

At the present moment the prospect of new rounds of mass 'tax protests' must be a focus for sharp propaganda directed to the vanguard of the class, arguing for a re-direction of this displaced militancy into an offensive against wage restraint which is the real cause of the present hardship being expressed as a "tax burden", and against redundancy which is certain to become a growing threat by employers. Already hundreds have been earmarked for the scrap-heap in the tobacco companies, and with the full collaboration of the ITGWU leaders the Dublin Premier-Hughes Dairies are proceeding piecemeal with the rationalisation scheme rejected by the roundsmen despite the all-out effort of the union to sell it to them. A key issue in this and all cases of redundancy is the fight for workers inspection of company accounts - not confined to the year in which the boss claims to be losing money! At Premier Hughes, as part of selling the deal to the workers the Union bureaucrats viewed the books of the company privately and told the workers that cutbacks were necessary for the company to survive. There must be no reliance on such claims: rank and file inspection must be the key cutting edge of the fight to OPEN THE BOOKS. And all the years of profit, the subsidies, expense accounts and behind-the scene-dealing must be exposed. Whether or not the boss is "making a loss" at a given moment does not change all the years of exploitation. Pleas to save the company mean only one thing - a blank cheque for a hike in bosses profits, an invitation to cut the earnings and intensify the productivity of those remaining on and a weakening of workers' resolve to fight further redundancies or closure.

If the bosses threaten redundancy the response of workers must be to demand five days pay whether or not there's five days work; cut the hours not the jobs! That is one part of the fighting policy around which militants must be organised in the period ahead.

It is possible that the anti-wage agreement strikes of recent years may diminish as the crisis of profit-rates, credit and inflation bites deeper in the industrial sector and as redundancy replaces wage concessions even more frequently as the only response of employers. In that situation it is doubly important to put to the fore the need to fight lay-offs as the goal to which militancy should be directed. The Bureaucracy is quite content to channel and control a militancy displaced into a fudged 'tax reform' campaign which they know cannot succeed in reducing taxes without inviting cuts to the already minimal social services. So far, they have won the first round in getting the national demonstrations onto a weekend, except perhaps in Cork where a work-day demonstration in the afternoon may be the only response to what the Galway Trades Council put forward as a national tactic some time ago.

The tax question is also important in itself for workers, and that is why the ICTU campaign has deliberately softened and fudged the key demands on taxes. The demands must be sharpened - including a clear demand for indexation of tax allowances and tax-bands, an unequivocal demand for a steeply progressive tax on large farmers, restoration of full company taxes, and an end to tax-holidays for multinational export-companies.

It is a clear indictment of the treachery of the Congress 'lead' in the tax campaign that one of the sharpest mobilising demands for women workers has been ignored by the Bureaucrats - against the super-tax on married women. Two teachers have done more through a court case to bring nearer the abolition of this gross anti-democratic arrangement than all of the mutterings of the union leaders.

WRONG ANSWERS FOR MILITANT WORKERS

With the ebb in public sector militancy, excepting the move by the nurses to build a fight against low pay and for decent wages and status, there is no readymade nationally-based vanguard in the industrial sector which can be expected to lead a new wage offensive during the current period. This is due both to the deep sectionalism of the union movement and the very diverse nature of the new industrial base of international capital in Ireland which has been able to a large degree to stave off the organisation of militancy with threats, concessions, social dilution of the provincial workforces and "sweetheart deals" with the big unions. Nevertheless, the strikes of groups such as Leyland, kilroys, N.E.T., the Dublin Oil Workers, Electron, Telecommunications etc. must be a crucial focus of agitation towards building, in and through struggles, the leadership of a national rank and file movement.

The Telecommunications workers, and under their lead the ITGWU members in Data Products and Kilroys, like the Ferenka workers before them have shown the instinctual hostility of the rank and file to the treachery of the Union leaders, and their willingness to oppose them. Unfortunately, these workers, a substantial section of ITGWU Branch 13, are repeating the mistake of the Ferenka workers by leaving the union to join another - AGEMOU. That option we believe to be the wrong road to take, giving a reprieve to union leaders already discredited through the painful experience of the past years and leading to illusions and possibly new demoralisation in the new union. Furthermore, we believe that the interests of the trade union movement are not served in any way by the action of these workers' representatives in going to the bourgeois courts for an injunction to restrain ITGWU from purporting to represent the new AGEMOU workers - an action that gives a license and encouragement to reactionaries and bureaucrats in the unions to use the courts with far more devastating effect against militants, and an action that was utterly superfluous in the situation where the Irish Transport officials had only 1% of the members with the new AGEMOU members in the majority and on strike against the Data bosses to establish their union rights through defence of a victimised representative. Such ill-conceived actions will rebound on militant workers for whom the fight against state, police and court intervention in the unions is a daily more urgent task.

DUBLIN GAS COMPANY

Similarly, we say to the section of Gas Co. workers leaving the FWUI for AGEMOU:- how does this advance the need of the FWUI workers to transform their union? Will you not now have to learn painfully all over again that even in AGEMOU only a rank and file movement that faces squarely the task of fighting for union

democracy and acts on a programme of sharp demands and direct action, only this can be relied upon as the way forward.

FWUI treachery broke the strike to force the Gas Co. to pay the minimal terms of the National Understanding. The union cynically announced a deal whereby the Company would apply for a price increase (on its mostly working class consumers) to pay the wage increase. Don't let your wage increase be taken away in gas bills! We say, build a rank and file committee of both WUI and AGEMOU in the industry to begin the fight to force them to open the books to expose how state grants to this major public utility have gone in dividends to parasitic investors like Fitzwilton. Demand the Nationalisation of the Gas Co. under workers control and without compensation to the owners. =

All those militants gone over to AGEMOU on the basis of its greater militancy must fight there for all the demands that they should have taken up in the ITGWU or FWUI etc., especially the election from the ranks, and recallability, of all union officials, holding open their jobs for them to return to after their stint.

CRISIS IN THE SIX COUNTIES

In the North workers are facing problems more profound than anywhere else in Ireland or anywhere in Britain. For, weakened by the divisions of Imperialism, the majority section's loyalism ties it ideologically to the Orange bosses and preserves the Northern Ireland union movement as an autonomous enclave in the all-Ireland Congress, an enclave dominated by a bureaucracy all too keen to compromise with Loyalism and its bourgeois masters. Thus doubly weakened by sectionalism, suffering the worst living standards in the whole of the EEC, this section of the Irish working class is at the same time facing the harsher attacks of the British bosses' offensive: - criminal cutbacks in social services and massive redundancies compared to the 26-County situation; - this in a population where official unemployment figures are touching 12% and local areas of jobless- especially in catholic towns - touch on 40%.

Thus, in the past year, from the public-sector strike protests against low pay, through large-scale redundancies in industry and in wage battles against the 5% pay limit, the working class in the Six Counties has failed to create any leadership capable of winning significant gains.

Thus the perspective of an all-Ireland 32-County rank and file movement against the capitalist offensive is necessary not only for the strength that such class unity can bring to the whole but also for the strength that a national movement, dedicated to make the bosses pay for their own crisis, can bring to isolated and deeply divided sections.

In December '79 the IWG will publish a Special issue of Class Struggle outlining the programme we believe revolutionaries must fight for as the basis for transforming the whole labour movement to put it on a war-footing against capitalism.

On McDonalds Strike: See page 56.

NICARAGUA — AN ACID TEST FOR TROTSKISTS

PERMANENT REVOLUTION BETRAYED!

The smashing of the Somoza regime by the Nicaraguan masses was a major defeat for American Imperialism in "its own backyard", a defeat which the American and European bourgeoisies are doing everything in their power to reverse. As in other recent crisis-centres for Imperialism, the Nicaraguan struggle puts to the test the programme and strategy of all those claiming to be fighting to break the power of the bourgeoisie and the imperialists and to establish workers and peasants power.

The crisis in Nicaragua has glaringly revealed, yet again, that the largest world grouping claiming to stand in the tradition of Trotsky, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) is as ready as ever to ditch the programme of revolutionary Marxism precisely at the point where it is most crucial to the arming of the Nicaraguan proletariat and peasantry against the manoeuvrings of imperialism and its allies in Nicaragua. The Irish sister organisation of the USFI is the "Peoples Democracy" which has re-published without dissent or criticism the major statements of the USFI on the crisis in Nicaragua.

The mass uprisings of workers and peasants in the cities and the countryside of Nicaragua resulted not only in the downfall of the American puppet regime of Somoza but in the almost complete destruction of the forces of state repression. In the cities and countryside Civil Defence Committees played a major role in the insurrections — organising the distribution of food, health care and other tasks and developing the popular militias. In the capital Managua it was the armed militia and population who stormed the 'Bunker' — the H.Q. of Somoza and the National Guard.

THE FSLN FREEDOM FIGHTERS

The other major force in the overthrow of Somoza was the Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN) whose guerilla fighters increasingly took on Somoza's National Guard in open battle in 1978.

Formed in 1962, and taking their name from the liberal nationalist General Augusto Sandino, who led a guerilla army against occupying US Marines and US-backed Nicaraguan forces between 1925 and 1934, the Sandinistas took their inspiration from Castro's overthrow of Batista. Drawing their strength from the petty bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia, all three factions of the Sandinistas worked with a perspective of overthrowing Somoza through an alliance with the 'democratic' or 'anti-Somoza' bourgeoisie. All factions agreed that, for the foreseeable future, a bourgeois-democratic regime, based on a 'mixed economy' was the goal for Nicaragua after Somoza was overthrown. On the duration of this regime, and the strategy for achieving it, the factions differed. The Proletarian Tendency emphasised organisation among the urban working class while the largest grouping, the Terceristas, had close links with the Group of Twelve, a group of prominent businessmen, lawyers and priests, and with the Social-Democratic Second International (Schmidt, Soares, Gonzalez, Cluskey in the European labour/socialist parties.)

THE FSLN AND THE ANTI-SOMOZA BOURGEOISIE

The perspective of an alliance with the 'anti-Somoza bourgeoisie' was possible because of the increasing divisions within the ruling class. Having benefited throughout Somoza's regime from the smashing of trade unions, strikes and peasant revolts, by the mid-1970s the voracious appetite of Somoza was even beginning to squeeze the other major bourgeois families who controlled sections of Nicaraguan industrial, banking and farming businesses. By 1979 Somoza had managed to accrue into personal ownership between 25 and 30% of all arable land. Huge amounts of aid and loans, given to repair the damage to Managua caused by the 1972 earthquake, were channelled either into Somoza's personal bank account or into his own business enterprises which were given the choice contracts for reconstruction.

The leading figure in the bourgeois opposition was Pedro Joaquin Chamorro, a member of one of the largest families which controlled the Banco de America and owned the big daily paper, 'La Prensa'. He was the founder of the Democratic Union for Liberation (UDEL), an alliance of the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie. Chamorro campaigned in American ruling-class circles for the dumping of Somoza before his regime should strengthen the Marxists any further. His assassination in January 1978 by Somozaists resulted in a large-scale employers' 'strike', and in the further social isolation of Somoza.

By June 1979 a coalition government in exile had been formed from the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie and the FSLN. The five-person 'Junta of the Government of National Reconstruction' (GRN) had representatives of the two biggest bourgeois families - Chamorro's wife and Alfonso Robelo Callejas, a member of the Montealegre Callejos family which controls the Banco Nicaraguense as well as two other respectable bourgeois figures. The FSLN had one representative, the Sandinista Commander, Daniel Ortega.

FSLN REASSURES THE BOURGEOISIE

How far the FSLN was willing to compromise to achieve this coalition with the bourgeoisie was shown by the July accords between the FSLN and GRN. This envisaged a new national army being formed out of the FSLN regulars and the hated but purged National Guard. Despite the declaration that only National Guard officers and soldiers 'who conducted themselves honestly and patriotically' would be included (a difficult thing to find in a force that was notorious for its mass murder, rape and torture of Nicaraguans) the US-inspired deal was to hand over leadership to the younger, US-trained officers in the Guard. The deal was agreed with Somoza. It was only the intransigence of the deputy left by the fleeing Somoza, Francesco Urcuyo, in refusing to hand over power to the Junta that scuttled this deal which was aimed at securing an orderly transfer of power and continuity in the army.

Although the bourgeois state machine had virtually disintegrated under the impact of the masses and the FSLN forces, leaving the FSLN and CDC militias in control of the country, the FSLN was meticulously holding to its perspective of consolidating its coalition with the bourgeoisie. The provisional cabinet, appointed by the Junta, gave posts of agriculture, cultural, interior and foreign minister to the Sandinistas. All the economic ministries were reserved to bourgeois figures. The economic minister is former Secretary General of the Central American Common Market, the finance minister a leading figure in the Banco de America.

The FSLN leadership rushed to reassure the world bourgeoisie that for the moment they had nothing to fear. In terms of land and industry, only the property of the Somozas was to be confiscated. While this is a considerable gain for the land-hungry peasantry, given that Somoza controlled huge amounts of land, it still left intact huge estates in a country where 1.5% of the population owned 41% of all arable land before the fall of Somoza.

FSLN HOLDS BACK AND DISARMS THE MASSES

Already "unapproved" land seizures - in other words peasant occupations of lands not owned by Somozaists, have been reversed. FSLN leader Daniel Ortega, commenting to a Cuban interviewer about the possible dangers of class struggle, declared:

"In order to keep the struggle from becoming more acute it is necessary to implement the programme supported by the Front and the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie. Then we must struggle against various kinds of deviation".

The "deviations" referred to obviously are the land seizures which threaten the FSLN's alliance with the bourgeoisie. And, while the three major banks have been nationalised, they had already been dramatically looted by Somoza in his last months of office and the owners have been compensated with Government bonds at a 6½% interest rate. The FSLN leadership has already reassured the imperialists that the crippling debts incurred by the Somoza regime will be repaid, provided they are rescheduled. They amount to \$1.53 billion of which \$593 million is due to be repaid by an economy which was left by Somoza with \$3.5 million after he had departed with a fortune estimated at \$500 million. The large-scale foreign investments - finishing and assembling factories in tax-free, duty-free zones set up by Somoza, 70% of which are US-owned, remain untouched.

From September, under the pressure of the bourgeoisie led by a campaign in the Chamorro family's La Prensa newspaper, the FSLN has been disarming the popular militias which sprang up in the battle against Somoza. Some are being integrated into the national army and there is talk of creating a new national militia, firmly under the control of the FSLN.

The situation in Nicaragua is clearly unstable. For the bourgeoisie and the imperialists the vital task is to reconstruct, and reassert, their control over the state machine. The FSLN, with its control over the armed forces and its undoubted popularity and mass support, is for the moment the dominant force within the coalition. The bourgeoisie, though severely weakened, has the strength of imperialism behind it as well as the bourgeoisies of other Latin American countries.

American loans and aid will be conditional on the 'revolution' not being too far. European imperialism's representatives have already intervened in support of the Tercerista tendency through a visit of Mario Soares, leader of the Portuguese Socialist Party, and Filipe Gonzalez, of the Spanish Party, both intervening on behalf of the "Second International".

The FSLN continues to develop in the direction of Bonapartism despite 'left' speeches about "defending and extending the revolution" from its leaders. They attack 'extremists' of the Left who they think threaten their coalition with the bourgeoisie. The expulsion of the Bolivar Brigade, attacks on the Maoist organisation including arrests. (MAP/FO) are examples of this. At the same time

they are threatening the bourgeois parties with further land reform and nationalisation if they openly challenge the Sandinistas' power.

In such circumstances the tasks of a revolutionary communist organisation in Nicaragua should be absolutely clear. The overthrow of the Somoza regime was a vital blow against imperialism and a historic gain of the Nicaraguan masses. We defend those gains absolutely and the FSLN regime against the attacks of imperialism and its agents in Nicaragua. At the same time it is vital to build an independent revolutionary party that will fight to force those elements of the FSLN who claim to stand with the workers and peasants of Nicaragua to break with the agents of the bourgeois and imperialism in the coalition. Such a party would be fighting around the programme of struggle for working class power in Nicaragua - the only programme which can break imperialism's hold finally.

USFI FLOUNDERS

How does the record of the USFI measure up to these tasks? Far from taking up the necessity for an independent communist strategy in Nicaragua, the USFI has shown, once again, that it prefers to throw its weight behind a petty-bourgeois proto-Left-Bonapartist regime. It does this to the point of consciously ditching its programme and publicly stating its opposition to organising politically against the FSLN regime.

Before the triumph of the FSLN and the masses, and before the USFI was carried away by the sight of a 'revolution' "unfolding" before its very eyes it was willing to outline what revolutionary Marxists 'will be struggling for'. This included "repudiation of the foreign debt, expropriation and nationalisation without compensation" of not only Somoza's land and property but also that of "Imperialism and of the national capitalists", i.e. the 'anti-Somoza bourgeoisie'. A government was demanded that could carry out this programme, which would exclude "all representatives of the ruling classes and imperialism". (Intercontinental Press, 16.7.79)

EXPULSION OF THE SIMON BOLIVAR BRIGADE

These demands were rapidly to be dropped as the USFI adapted to the massive popular support for the FSLN. The SWP section in the U.S. took the lead in this by openly siding with the FSLN regime against the Simon Bolivar Brigade. The Brigade was organised by the PST (Socialist Workers Party), a sympathising section of the USFI in Colombia. It rapidly fell foul of the FSLN. Whatever the defects of the brigade's project and tactics, and the motives of the PST in launching it, the reasons given by the FSLN for its expulsion from Nicaragua were revealing. The charges included organising more than 70 trade unions, advocating seizure of all the land, organising militias in the barrios of Managua and in Bluefields.

Did the USFI rally to the support of these fighters for their published programme? Far from it. Mary Alice Waters in a leading article in Intercontinental Press (IP) on Sept. 3rd launched a vicious attack on the Brigade. It had tried to -

"Utilise the objective problems facing the revolution, the gap between the great hopes of the masses for immediate improvements in living standards and the difficulties of achieving this goal quickly"

This abandonment of their own programme - none of the demands of which had been carried out by the FSLN leaders and none of which

they even promise to carry out - is shameless enough. But to side with the petty-bourgeois/bourgeois nationalist bloc against those raising slogans in defence of the class interests of the proletariat and poor peasants, marks nothing less than a betrayal of the proletarian revolution in Nicaragua.

USFI SUBSTITUTES FSLN FOR REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

What would these self-proclaimed 'heirs' of Lenin and Trotsky make of the Bolsheviks' explicit non-support of the Provisional Government in March 1917? What would they make of their successful attempt to "utilise" the country's "objective problems", their raising of 'Peace, Bread and Land', and 'All Power to the Soviets' to win the masses from the Mensheviks and Kerensky?

A demonstration which had significant popular support, called by the Brigade when they were summoned to the FSLN HQ was condemned as a 'provocation'. The PST was sharply condemned for carrying out a policy

.."contrary to the position adopted by the USFI. The position of the USFI is to build a campaign of solidarity with the Nicaraguan revolution in collaboration with the FSLN, not in opposition to it." (IP, Sept 3.)

An official delegation from the USFI affirmed this position, declaring that the FSLN had been right to expel Brigade members. It reassured FSLN leaders that they were against any activity which would create divisions between "the mobilised masses and the FSLN".

The position arrived at by the USFI, explicitly stated in their statement of October 1st 1979 is that there is no need to build a revolutionary party independent of the FSLN leadership. Indeed, they see the possibility of these leaders evolving under the impact of the masses, into a vanguard party! The USFI's schema is to rely on the radicalisation of the FSLN leadership by the masses. But the masses themselves are not offered any tactics, let alone leadership, by the 'Trotskyists'.

USFI EVEN DROPS ITS OWN DEMOCRATIC PROGRAMME

Thus the USFI's formal programme for Nicaragua is unceremoniously ditched to sweeten their relations with the FSLN leadership. All the measures taken by the FSLN are lauded as either great steps forward for the revolution or measures necessary to gain 'breathing space':

"In order to accomplish their strategic goals, the FSLN leadership places a high priority on building a vanguard party rooted in the masses, organised through the CDCs... The character and history of the leadership of the FSLN ... show that it would be an error to place any a priori limits beyond which decisive sectors of the FSLN leadership cannot go as the process of permanent revolution unfolds."

Any agitation against the alliance between the FSLN and the bourgeoisie must, therefore, be jettisoned:-

"To focus political intervention to-day on the slogan 'All bourgeois ministers out of the government' would likewise be to succumb to the sectarian temptation of applying abstract schemas.

"Such a slogan amounts to deliberately choosing today a direct confrontation on a national and international level, based solely on the correct observation that representatives of antagonistic social forces exist in the government structure" (IP, October 22nd).

Similarly, the USFI condemn any call for free elections or a Constituent Assembly, as playing into the hands of the 'Democratic counter revolution'. Whereas in Iran and Peru the USFI uses the slogan for a Constituent Assembly in such a way that it actually reinforces the democratic illusions of the masses, in Nicaragua they fall into the opposite error! They prefer to rely on a would-be Bonapartist regime to safeguard the democratic rights of the masses just as the Mandelites in the USFI preferred the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) to a Constituent Assembly in Portugal. Not content with jettisoning their socialist programme, the USFI in its haste to tail the FSLN throws out its democratic programme too!

For Marxists the demand for free elections and a Constituent Assembly are crucial weapons for enabling the masses to overcome their democratic illusions. We do not counterpose democratic slogans to the need to build soviets - as the USFI did in Iran. At the height of the dual power situation in Russia, the Bolsheviks demanded the convocation of a Constituent Assembly. But, for the USFI, any such demand would

"break the dialectical inter-relationship that has been established between the activity of the masses and the leftward evolution of the FSLN leadership" (USFI, Oct 1, '79).

USFI DROPS DEFENCE OF MINIMAL IMMEDIATE DEMANDS

The desperate need for the workers and peasants to expropriate the capitalists and landowners and repudiate the crippling foreign debts which would immediately clash with the FSLN's 'democratic stage of the revolution' disappear from the demands of the USFI except in the form of good advice to the FSLN leaders. These are necessary measures for some future date but, of course, cannot be agitated for independently and in opposition to the leadership of the Sandinistas! Fred Murphy, in IP Oct. 8th, is beside himself with rage against those who raise such demands:-

"In this situation there are severe limits on the improvements that can be made in the living standards of the masses. Playing on the objective problem, ultra-leftist sectarians are trying to build their own political formations in opposition to the FSLN".

IP notes, with obvious relief that a speech denouncing these 'deviations' from a leading FSLN Commandant...

"marked the opening of a campaign to counter the influence of sectarians."

Thus, not only are the socialist and democratic demands ditched but also the defence of the most minimal immediate demands is abandoned. In a remarkable piece of doublethink the USFI statement repeats its formal commitment to the defence of the revolution... "by arming the people" while its press has been hailing the formation of a 'professional' Sandinista army and peddling the FSLN explanation of the disarming of the militias as justifiable because arms got in the hands of 'criminal and unreliable elements'

USFI ESPOUSES THE 'CUBAN ROAD'

The formation of armed militias under the control of the popular committees provides the only real basis for resistance to imperialist intervention and the defence of working class interests in Nicaragua. To be in favour of a professional army is to hand over the defence of the interests of the masses to FSLN would-be Bonapartists.

Why is it that the USFI is so willing to liquidate its whole programme, and the need for a revolutionary party and place its faith for socialist revolution in the petty-bourgeois leadership of the FSLN? It does so to the point where it can declare that:-

"By explaining its programme and ideas, the Fourth International places itself firmly on the side of the FSLN's battle to ensure the victory of the revolution.

"By acting as loyal militants in the framework of the organisation which led the overthrow of Somoza and leads this revolution, the members of the Fourth International will defend the fundamental ideas of revolutionary Marxism" (USFI statement Oct 1st).

The USFI and many other strands of post-war Trotskyism has consistently adapted to what they see as a force capable of bringing about the establishment of a workers' state at the expense of mobilising independent working class action. These 'revolutionary Marxists' proclaim that the mass mobilisation of the workers and peasants will propel the FSLN leadership down the 'Cuban road'. They forget that this road is not the road to the political power of the working class. It is the road to a bureaucratic dictatorship over the proletariat and the repression of its political vanguard. In espousing the 'Cuban road' the USFI is, moreover, adopting by proxy the Stalinist programme of Socialism in One Country, a programme whose Castroite version has shown its true face in Eritrea. Castro himself has made it quite clear that he is against the revolution going 'too far' as he was in his support for the Popular Unity in Chile. The bloody outcome of this strategy was most tragically demonstrated in Chile itself.

This willingness to sacrifice the historic interests of the working class in the hope of achieving a 'deformed workers state' has led post-war Trotskyists into making a series of disastrous concessions to Bonapartist and Stalinist regimes - Tito in Yugoslavia Ben Bella in Algeria and to would-be Left-Bonapartists like Carvalho in Portugal.

For communists the mobilisation of the working class under independent revolutionary leadership around a programme for the smashing of the bourgeois state machine and the establishment of the proletariat's dictatorship on the basis of soviets, is not an 'optional extra' but the only road to establishing the political and economic power of the working class.

In Nicaragua the only genuine Trotskyists will be those who fight for political power for the working class through the establishment of workers' and peasants' soviets, armed peoples' militias and the dictatorship of the proletariat. We do not deny that the mass base of the FSLN must be won or that sections of the leadership might be won over. But they must be won to a revolutionary party fighting intransigently for the expropriation of the capitalists and imperialists and for spreading the revolution to the Balkanised republics of Central America and the Caribbean states under the slogan -

'For a Socialist Federation of Central America and the Caribbean'.

We do deny that the policy being pursued by the USFI leadership and most of its national sections represents a revolutionary strategy for the Nicaraguan masses. Indeed, these policies confirm on a broader scale than ever the bankrupt centrist nature of the USFI and spell potential disaster for all those workers and peasants who look to the USFI for leadership.

LWR & OCRFI -. ANOTHER CENTRIST CUL-DE-SAC ON NICARAGUA

The second major current laying claim to the name of Trotskyism, the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI) dominated by Lambert and the OCI in France has an Irish section "League for a Workers Republic" (LWR) whose journal (WR no. 76) stated in October:

"As in Iran, from the start the revolution in Nicaragua was marked as a proletarian revolution by the central role played by the working class through its own popularly-elected organs and its own armed activity against the old regime. But, as in Iran, the absence of any mass working class organisation led to a regime representing, not the working class, but the bourgeoisie coming to power." (WR 76, p. 23. Our emphasis)

Here it is not the absence of a revolutionary workers party and programme that poses the problem. In this we see yet again the universal two-part recipe of the OCRFI for socialist revolution everywhere - the building of a mass labour party and the fight for a Constituent Assembly (see below). Their position again abandons the strategy of Permanent Revolution. The Nicaraguan victory over Somoza was not a 'proletarian' revolution simply because workers played a key role in it - as they did against the Czar in February 1917 and the Shah in Iran etc. Nor would it have been if there were a mass labour party; - only under the leadership of a revolutionary workers party can a proletarian revolution be made. It is an axiom of Leninism that only a revolutionary workers party can lead the masses to the expropriation of capitalism under the armed dictatorship of the proletariat. That, if it needs to be said, has not happened in Iran nor is it happening in Nicaragua.

We can see this clearly in what the LWR/OCRFI support and reprint from the Mexican OCRFI section, Liga Obrera Marxista, as the basis of a programme for a workers victory in Nicaragua (WR 76, p 26). It mentions not a word about expropriating capitalism, nothing about socialism or the fight for a Workers and Peasants Government on a programme to stand over the gains of the masses and begin to dismantle the bourgeois state apparatus, nor does it offer any perspective of fighting ^{for} the Dictatorship of the Proletariat or a Socialist Federation of Central America. Here are the demands that should be taken up among the masses, for the OCRFI:-

- "National independence, full political liberties, democracy, the land for all the peasants. The centralisation of the political struggle to open a way for a sovereign Constituent Assembly, elected by the vote of all those who defeated the dictatorship, and which would decide:
- The dissolution of the National Guard and its replacement by a militia of workers, peasants and students
- the expropriation of the property of Somoza, the oligarchy and imperialist interests
- universal and secret suffrage

- The land to those who work
- The cancellation of the debts to imperialism
- full liberties for workers and peasants to constitute political and trade union organisations independent of the state
- a government responsible to the Constituent Assembly".

But what kind of government, we ask the LWR, can answer the needs of the masses to overcome their illusions in bourgeois democracy and confront Nicaraguan capitalism - the ally of imperialism despite its opposition to Somoza. Is it enough to say that the Assembly "would decide" on the democratic and anti-imperialist needs of the masses and act through 'a Government' responsible to it? Is this not in fact fighting for a bourgeois democratic programme in such a way as to reinforce every illusion in bourgeois democracy? For, the programme approvingly republished from the Mexican section is only a democratic anti-imperialist programme. It is not a proletarian revolutionary programme for working class political power. It is an inexcusable abandonment of the whole meaning and strategy of Permanent Revolution to claim as the LWR does:-

"On the basis of such a programme a Trotskyist organisation can be built in Nicaragua, which will guarantee the victory of the Nicaraguan workers and peasants" (WR 76 p. 26).

Again, as with the USFI, the centrism of the LWR and OCRFI which consistently manifests itself in a whole series of positions of that current, is again responsible for an evasion of the duty to state clearly the revolutionary perspectives of Trotskyists in this crucial testing crucible of struggle in Nicaragua.

We challenge the Peoples Democracy and the League for a Workers Republic to debate publicly with the IWG at an open meeting on what are the key programmatic demands and methods that Trotskyists must argue for in the situation of Nicaragua.

These we believe to be:

- For the independent organisation of the workers and peasants and the arming of their militias as the only means to defend the gains against imperialism, to fight for the most immediate needs and to prepare the basis for workers and peasants political power based on workers councils and peasants councils centralised nationally
- for the expropriation of all imperialist holdings, seizure of land from all the landowner capitalists, the expropriation of Nicaraguan capitalist plant and financial interests under workers control - without compensation
- for the ousting of the provisional Government of National Reconstruction and the immediate holding of free elections through universal suffrage to a democratic Constituent Assembly
- for a Workers and Peasants Government to stand over every gain of the masses in struggle, to dismantle the bourgeois apparatus of the state and to arm the workers and peasants in preparation for the revolutionary overthrow of bourgeois rule
- For the Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Peasants and the creation of a Workers and Peasants State,
- for the fight to extend the revolution into the creation of a Socialist Federation of Central American and Caribbean states
- For the urgent building of a Revolutionary Trotskyist party in Nicaragua, for international solidarity and the fight for a new Trotskyist International.

POLITICAL STATUS — 21

2 YEARS AFTER COALISLAND

In the first two issues of Class Struggle in June and Nov. 1977 the IWG in an analysis of the Relatives Action Committees spelt out sharply the reasons why such committees would not provide the basis for building genuine democratic anti-imperialist united fronts of workers, socialists and Republicans, the only correct Marxist basis for a fight to rebuild a workers-led mass movement capable of defending Political Status, restoring democratic rights and driving the British Army out of Ireland.

Alone on the Irish Left in this view, we based our arguments on the following points.

- (1) The organisational nature of the RACs, centred largely on relatives, meant in practice, if not in rhetoric, that the issue would increasingly be divorced from all the other anti-democratic features of the Northern state - repressive legislation, Diplock Courts, torture etc.; - that this would have the inevitable effect of turning the campaign into a "moral" and "humanitarian" one for "human rights" thus playing into the hands of the Catholic Church, bourgeois nationalists and others whose primary intentions are to flood the anti-unionist and Southern working class with the poisonous ideology of pacifism.
- (2) That an organisation built mainly around the involvement of family relatives of the prisoners - the fault largely of the Irish Left's total failure to fight independently for a workers-based movement as the backbone of any campaign - meant that the necessary hard political confrontations with republicanism and its ideology, strategy and tactics would be made more difficult as the relatives understandably would see such political debate and polemical discussion before the anti-unionist working class as divisive; thus a means of mobilising the masses on key issues facing the class and simultaneously exposing the wrong methods and ideas of non-Marxist forces could not be used to challenge the organisational and ideological domination of 'physical-force' republicanism in the anti-unionist working class.
- (3) Such a situation would mean both an absence of real living democracy within the RAC committees and thus prevent them from being real action committees open above all to anti-unionist trade-unionists, shop-steward committees etc.
- (4) That in their attempt to describe the RACs as genuine united front bodies, the Irish Marxist Left in the RAC - Peoples Democracy (now incorporating the USFI group MSR) and the Socialist Workers Tendency (sister group in the SLP of the British SWP) had completely abandoned the tactic of the united front and in doing so had abandoned any claim to fight for an alternative political and military strategy to revolutionary nationalism - in effect they had ditched the whole strategy of the Permanent Revolution for the National Struggle in Ireland and capitulated in deeds if not also in words to Republicanism.

Two years after that analysis and a further article in C.S.3 (May '78) analysing the Coalisland Conference as a complete victory for the Provisionals and their followers - it is necessary to re-examine the developments of the RAC campaign in order both to test the correctness of our assessment and the strategic and tactical lessons that flowed from it.

The most obvious development has been the emergence of new RACs throughout the North. The IWG analysis did underestimate the possibility of this happening, overlooking the fact that as more prisoners went on the blanket the more relatives would be drawn into the campaign. Related to this and to the fact (which no-one could have foreseen) that the prisoners decided to escalate their blanket protest into the 'dirty protest', there has been a significant growth of publicity and concern on the issue. A number of large demonstrations in 1978 clearly illustrate the existence of widespread feeling of sympathy for the protest. However, it is precisely the partial success of the RACs in publicising and providing a focus for that concern that has revealed more explicitly than ever all the fundamental weaknesses of the campaign analysed by the IWG. As the issue has become more public and the RAC more extended throughout the North, all the worst features have been intensified, revealing starkly the hollowness of the claims of the centrists - P.D., S.W.T. that a real mass movement was being built in the North capable of winning Political Status for anti-imperialist prisoners.

Firstly, the fact that the campaign itself has been defined almost exclusively by a perspective of marches and rallies organised on an average of one every two months underlines the major dilemma the campaign has now reached. For, while the turnout to some of the marches has been very high (though it should never be forgotten that in 1976 Dunville Park held a crowd of 12-15,000 to hear Maura Drumm's last speech about H-Blocks) the immediate and obvious question raised for serious revolutionary marxists is how to transform the support of the marches into a permanent and growing force and power capable of confronting directly and physically the R.U.C. and British Army in action. Without this, the perspective of marches and rallies with no other aim than to listen to rhetoric from the Provisionals and their imitators in the IRSP about the need to support the 'national liberation struggle' runs the great risk of ebbing away the anger and hatred already mobilised, into frustration, impotence and passivity if no clear goals are set by its leaders and the means for achieving them by the masses themselves spelt out.

Already this has happened as both the tempo of the marches and the numbers attending them has begun to decline - for it is clear that the RAC campaign has no real strength or weight or perspective beyond demonstrating the extent of "public indignation" in Ireland and internationally. For many in the campaign, its failure has naturally strengthened the view that only international support will compel "world opinion" to pressure the British government to change its ways here. This is the essence of the moral and humanitarian plea at the heart of the RAC campaign, focussing largely on the "violation of human rights" articulated by the Catholic Church and directly linked to reactionary clerics like Fr. Faul and Murray. As we shall see this strain is intimately bound up with the political, ideological and electoral methods of bourgeois Nationalists - especially the Irish Independence Party whose role in the McAliskey/P.D. Euro-Election campaign will be examined later. It goes without saying that such influence has led the RAC to be firmly committed to

peaceful non-violent protest and against any attempts to confront the state forces on the streets, even when as regularly happens, they prevent the marches and rallies achieving their pre-arranged destinations. Its non-violent character is defended by the RAC in the belief, shared by Provisionals and non-Provos alike, that riots and violence will tarnish the image of the campaign internationally and lose it support locally. The deadly and deadening ideologies of social pacifism, fuelled by every "respectable" cleric, councillor, lawyer or politician claiming to support the campaign, has helped to drive the RACs further down the road to pressure group politics and publicity stunts.

The visit by an RAC/Sinn Fein delegation (including a released H-Block prisoner) to the Papal nuncio to plead for the Pope's intercession for the prisoners, reveal not only the bankruptcy of the campaign itself but also the suffocating ideology of religion enveloping it. (The fullsome public statements of Sinn Fein welcoming the Pope's visit shows the hypocrisy of their claim to be "secular and socialist Republicans".)

But the real and tragic consequence of the failure of the RAC could be seen much earlier from the fact that despite all the windy rhetoric about "mass" campaigns and "mass movements" peddled by both the Provos and the centrists alike over the last years, the North has witnessed in that period the most systematic wave of lifting, brutalising and framing of hundreds in the nationalist areas - without a flicker of protest from the "mass movement" reputedly led by the RAC. Even the revelations about torture by the RUC surgeon Irwin, and the cautious admissions of the Bennet Report brought nothing in the way of orchestrated protests. The thousands repeatedly called upon to march up and down the Falls Road, in Armagh, etc. are silent when the chips are down. A "mass movement" against repression which cannot be mobilised when it is occurring daily all around it but can only appear on Sundays to hear the same speeches over and over again will neither win political status nor offer much of a threat to British imperialism.

REPUBLICANISM, THE RACS AND MASS STRUGGLE

The attitude of the Provisionals to the RAC Campaign reveals in the sharpest possible way the cul-de-sac of republicanism faced with the task of responding to the most immediate issues of repression in the anti-unionist population in order to take the struggle forward. Its bankruptcy flows directly from the political nature of the Provisional republican movement, Sinn Fein. Essentially a conspiratorial nationalist military organisation, it subordinates all political questions of strategy and tactics for mobilising the masses North and South to its own technical ability to continue the armed struggle and the bombing campaign.

Devoid of any class analysis of Irish society as the only correct guide to political and military action, the Provos have no conception of how to relate the most sharply posed issues of the moment - political status, repression - to their overall aim and goals. Consequently, they have no political or military role for the masses of the anti-unionist and Southern workers except as a passive sea in which to swim. As Republican News of Dec. 9th 1978 stated this attitude clearly:-

"Yet the rigid imperialist mentality of the Brits makes them incapable of understanding ... the extent of the popular base upon which the IRA war effort necessarily rests, a base which is superficially passive to an ignorant observer but which in fact provides fertile pasture for Republican growth and renewal" (our emphases).

No doubt we should conclude from this type of argument that the "superficially passive" South is a seething bed of support for the struggle? Tell that to the RACs! With such a position it is no surprise that the Republican Movement has always been deeply ambiguous about building a real mass movement. (They pulled out of the joint-action Political Hostages Release Campaign in 1974.) There are two related factors at the root of this political ambiguity. Firstly, their total opposition to any struggle for immediate democratic demands which might appear to confer legitimacy on the Northern state in the manner of the Officials (SFWP). Thus, for the Provisionals, all struggles of this kind carry the danger of attempting to "divert" the nationalist "people" into another "Civil Rights" illusion, and away from the fight for the 32-County Republic. This position was put so well by the Derry Sinn Féin's attack on McAliskey's anti-repression Euro-Election campaign:-

"We reject all opportunism of the right or the left.

Bernadette McAliskey is capitalising on the political ignorance of sincerely motivated relatives whose only concern is the immediate short-term welfare of prisoners and daughters. The aim of the prisoners goes far beyond mere P.O.W. status, an issue deliberately created by the Brit regime to divert people, time and energy from the main goal of national liberation."

-in the Derry Journal, May 18th, '79

Secondly, this essentially maximalist position is related to and determined by their conspiratorial and elitist methods of organisation among nationalist workers.

Such movements carry within them the possibility of raising as a necessary step in taking the struggle forward, questions of overall strategy, tactics and methods for mobilising and uniting the nationalist and Southern workers. It is this danger that the Provisionals most fear, for such a united front movement would reveal sharply the Provisional leaders' real position about mobilising workers as workers North and South. It would also raise the question why PSF candidates and elected representatives in the Southern local elections never made an issue of H-Block - nor have they since! Above all, such a development would starkly reveal the deeply undemocratic nature of the Provos' internal organisation.

A united front movement centred on the organisations of workers and drawing in the anti-unionist communities and housing estates must seek to employ above all the key weapon of strike action as a means of hitting imperialism at its capitalist root (profit). Linking directly through rank and file workers with Southern trade unionists, it would begin inevitably to reveal not only the tactical lunacy of the bombing campaign (against civilian and 'economic' targets), but also the whole strategic and organisational inability of Republicanism to solve the National Question.

This is the nub of the Provisionals' (and for that matter the IRSP's) equivocation about political status and the fight for democratic rights - first their unwillingness to do anything about

Political Status until after the women relatives of the prisoners formed their action committees in Belfast, and then when these emerged, a determination to keep them under Provo control to prevent any kind of criticism of the Provisional movement from the Left or the Right. Their success in doing this in no small way flows from the role of the so-called Marxist Left in the RACs.

THE LEFT AND THE RAC

When the RACs first emerged in Belfast in late 1976 the IWG alone argued the need to extend the committees in real joint-action democratically controlled bodies open above all to anti-unionist workers and trade unionists. The role of the PD and MSR groups (now fused) was a disgusting capitulation to the more backward consciousness of the RACs, arguing that there were no organised workers in the anti-unionist ghettos of the North, an argument trotted out again recently by one of their leading members in Dublin. The IWG argued that unless this perspective would be taken up, the whole campaign would inevitably turn into a moral and humanitarian one, that its internal life would not permit the kind of political debate and discussion before the masses to break down apathy but leave them open to be used as passive followers of the Provos' military strategy. At the Coalisland Conference (Feb '78) we distributed a programme of action outlining our criticism of the RAC campaign, spelling out why it was leading the anti-unionist masses into a cul-de-sac, and outlining our alternative. While we have regularly attended all the major marches of the RAC we have steadfastly refused to join committees closed to genuine political debate. The centrist left, on the other hand, continued to work in the RAC, refused to argue for workers' participation, refused to openly criticise the bankrupt leaders of the Provos' civilian-economic bombing campaign as a factor in the general apathy. In other words, they accepted the crippling limits needed by the Provos to limit the committees to a safe single-issue, providing a regular propaganda platform for them. PD and MSR, having abandoned the theory of Permanent Revolution and the task of mobilising anti-unionist and Southern workers in united-front committees to fight for democratic demands, continued to defend the RACs as democratic bodies capable of being built into genuine united fronts. They were later to be joined by the opportunists of the Socialist Workers Movement (SWT now in the SLP) who described the RAC in the following manner:-

"The early RAC meetings were one long struggle for democracy - usually against Sinn Fein. After years of Republican domination in the areas, local members argued for and won democratic organisation - like elected chairs at meetings, voting by delegates etc. Eventually Belfast evolved a central structure to organise the activities of local groups. Central leadership is elected by voting delegates for the local areas. Weekly meetings of delegates decide on policy and leaders in Belfast. Any important resolutions are given a week's notice so local groups can discuss the issue and instruct their delegate".

-S.W. Review, Jan '79, p.22

That's all fine in principle, but the writer of the piece, like her organisation in general, conceals the fact that in its programme, orientation and method of action, the RACs have never even before T.U.C.A.R.'s emergence, sought to mobilise anti-unionist workers. The fact is that the SWT and PD have abandoned that

alternative orientation and strategy as the price that they are prepared to pay for their opportunistic presence in the RACs. The internal democratic activity and organisation so glowingly described by SWT are wholly organisational, involving mainly relatives of the prisoners, no political discussion on strategy or tactics, on lessons of the struggle or the political solution. Like the Coalisland conference in Feb. '78 which SWM, MSR, PD etc. described enthusiastically as the foundation for a mass campaign against imperialism, such meetings conceal the real differences, issues and lessons of strategy and tactics, methods of organisation that need to be debated before a real campaign with teeth can begin.

The truth of this analysis has emerged again and again in the life of the RACs; for example, after the Coalisland Conference, a programme of jointly organised marches was set up for the year. The Provos, quite cynically, after all their talk about "unity" at Coalisland simply decided they would organise the October march in Derry (which had explicitly been the subject of a resolution for joint organisation adopted at Coalisland) and they decided who would be on the platform. They did so, despite a public letter from the Left representatives of PD, McAliskey's group and the IRSP which called for a democratic platform. And what did the RACs say? Not one word of protest from this body formally committed to defend democratic rights.

P.D. CHANGES ITS LINE

In the same context, and around the same time, the Central RAC in Belfast removed all representatives of political groups from its deliberations because of "their divisive interruptions" - in fact attempts by PD supporters to extend the RAC to include the SDLP and the IIP. Again, no protest from any RAC Branches. And again, the suspension from the "democratic" central committee of a PD member for reporting meetings and discussions back to his own organisation. Finally the decision by Sinn Fein and the IRA to get the prisoners to call on the RAC to refuse to support McAliskey's anti-repression Euro-Election campaign revealed in the starkest fashion the correctness of the IWG analysis. The left's lies and cover-up had been exposed. The RAC could no longer conceal the fact of their domination by the Provos. It only took the visit to the Papal Nuncio by an RAC delegation and a Sinn Fein H-Block prisoner to put the cap on it.

PD, having for three years attacked the IWG analysis as nonsense, now are forced in their Sept. '79 "Socialist Republic" to recognise all of the criticisms of the IWG about the RAC domination by the Provisionals. But with customary centrist dishonesty and slippery deceitfulness PD attempt to explain this in such a way that neatly avoids their own earlier conclusions about the RAC and their own political responsibility in peddling illusions about the RAC's independence. According to PD now the real reason for the decline of the RACs stemmed from the failure at Coalisland in '78 of a broad platform of anti-imperialist unity to emerge. It says in Socialist Republic:-

"The movement towards unity came to full fruition with the 1978 Conference at Coalisland ... but the Conference ended without the issue (of unity) being resolved and the committee elected after it failed to win a broad unity and dissolved."

- S.R. Vol 2, no. 5 p.4

The IWG in our analysis immediately after the Coalisland meeting came to exactly the same conclusion then, though of course we

27

argued for a quite different concept and form of unity at that conference. We concluded then that the conference was a disaster that would solve nothing.

Let us look at what PD said then - in S.R. Feb. '78, Vol 1, no.1:

"The recent anti-repression Conference at Coalisland can be counted as a major success for the anti-imperialist movement in Ireland " and...

"The Coalisland Conference was a major boost for the anti-imperialist struggle!"

The only qualification to this wholly uncritical analysis and conclusion was that the conference might have included other unspecified "layers" of Irish people - no mention of workers, North or South. Presumably PD meant the Bourgeois Nationalists of the SDLP, IIP and in the South, Fianna Fail.

The IWG, in our analysis, pointed out that the conference was a disaster, flooded by an avalanche of republican and radical demagoguery, evading every basic question by permitting no debate before the audience. PD and McAliskey defended the suppression of criticism one hundred percent and were directly involved in permitting the Provisionals to get off the hook of any public accountability for their tactics and strategy. Two years later, PD now admit this conference and its follow-up meeting to have been a failure. The basic question we ask PD to explain is the change in analysis and what lessons do they draw from this serious failure to analyse and orientate correctly to the Provos and their supporters.

Secondly, how if Coalisland represented the fruit of a whole year's activity drawing in larger and larger sections of anti-unionists, how was it possible for such gains to be squashed at one conference without so much as a murmur from the newly mobilised layers of anti-unionists? The answer to this question is more important, for PD, having acknowledged the failure of Coalisland and the decline of the RAC, conclude that the RACs can still be a vehicle for anti-unionist unity - as perceived by them - namely a broad front of the Provos, PD, IIP and the SDLP. They have learnt nothing about their mistakes but are prepared to cover their tracks in the most dishonest manner to avoid facing up to their own responsibility in part for the present cul-de-sac. They say:-

"The RACs are far from finished, however. All the major initiatives of past years have been built and supported by RAC members and during this period committees have been set up all over the North. Many of the rural committees are relatively new and fresh and have escaped the worst of the demoralisation." (S.R. Sept. '79, pp 4-5)

As we have argued above, the real reasons for PD's failures lie in it having abandoned the strategy of the Permanent Revolution for the National Question, leading to their capitulation to all forms of Irish nationalism and republicanism. This is formally expressed in their adoption and application of the USFI's (United Secretariat of the Fourth International) tactic of "class-struggle" unity (so-called) which in Ireland actually means abandoning any orientation to the organised anti-unionist working class or Southern workers in favour of the non- or anti-working class forces - in the North the IIP and SDLP and Provos, and in the South, the Gaelic Athletic Association, Fianna Fail, the Gaelic League and the cosmetic

addition of the odd trade union bureaucrat, e.g. Mullen in Dublin or ITGWU's Andy Connolly in Navan. The PD group in the North, despite the evidence of anti-unionist workers marching and even striking against internment and repression, mimic the most backward Provisional supporters in claiming that there are no organised anti-unionist workers in the North. So much for the legacy of James Connolly!

It is this wholly opportunistic strategy that has kept PD in the RACs and which has led them further down that cul-de-sac through its involvement with Mc Aliskey's IIP-backed Euro-Election Anti-Repression campaign.

LESSONS OF Mc ALISKEY'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The PD's line in the election campaign was simply to follow the logic of the "pressure group" politics of the RAC in which "getting more publicity", "telling the Irish people and the whole world" was seen as the way of forcing imperialism to submit. In effect the McAliskey campaign was an explicit avowal of bourgeois electoralism, the belief, namely, that getting into Parliament can be the means of changing the system. It was no surprise that the constitutional Nationalists of the Irish Independence Party were prepared to sit down with the red revolutionaries of the PD and the evergreen maverick McAliskey if these socialists were quite prepared "in the interests of unity" to abandon their socialist banner. The "unity" campaign was conducted so as not to upset the imposing list of nationalists, lawyers, solicitors, priests, shopkeepers and councillors all publicly backing McAliskey by calling for workers-based action to win Political Status. McAliskey's campaign literature told the anti-unionist workers that getting her rather than SDLP's John Hume into Strasbourg "would ensure that the authentic demands of the united anti-unionist people are heard in the heart of the European Parliament" (election leaflet, our emphasis.) So, the world's bourgeois conscience which will cynically and daily ignore mass killings in Chile, the terrors of South Africa, Pol Pot's genocide in Kampuchea etc. etc., was seen as the means which would end the horrors of the H-Blocks. What rubbish!

The IWG are not against any socialist standing in Parliament, European or otherwise. But we believe that to do so imposes both the responsibility of fighting openly for our programme in all its entirety, for the Irish working class, and also the duty to expose the role of all parliaments as the fraudulent means by which the ruling classes of all capitalist countries dupe the masses. This means that, instead of peddling illusions to the masses to the effect that getting a seat in parliament will bring the issue to the European heartland and therefore nearer a solution, we argued for the mobilisation and self-activity of the working class into local committees of struggle - extending them into the neighbourhoods and communities and seeking to link them in a chain to Southern workers - as the only means of laying the basis for a real fight against imperialism. McAliskey and PD, SWT etc. would have none of this. Her 30,000 votes cannot be said to mean anything politically; - one march of striking workers would count for a hundred times more! As it was, the IWG critically supported the McAliskey campaign. We argued that she should break with the IIP, hold real public meetings (and not a whistle-stop tour that excluded debate) and call for worker-based action on H-Block and repression as the only way forward.

If anything served to confirm the correctness of the IWG analysis above, it was the conference on Political Status on Sunday Oct 23rd. in Belfast's 'Green Briar'. Attended by about 500 people, the conference had been advertised as signalling the recognition by the Provisionals for a re-direction of the campaign. What this meant was evident from the list of actors, pop-singers, footballers and human-rights activists invited to attend (- ominously for the planned "redirection" few of them turned up!). It was also rumoured that Sinn Fein had acknowledged that full support for the armed struggle should no longer be a condition for participation in the fight for Political Status.

Whatever the IWG's feelings about such reports, we assumed sincerely that at least they acknowledged major weaknesses in the RAC campaign and indicated the possibility of a Conference organised seriously and democratically to review the lessons of past struggle in the process of open and honest debate for a new way forward. As the IWG leaflet for the Conference stated:-

"Nearly two years later (since Coalisland) we believe it is an urgent necessity for this conference to-day to make an honest and open assessment of the campaign so far in order to draw the valuable lessons of struggle. We believe sincerely that unless this conference takes stock of and alters the whole organisational and political basis of the campaign then not only the tireless work of the relatives but the heroic sacrifice of the prisoners will be in vain".

Those who anticipated such an outcome were to be profoundly disappointed. The conference was, like Coalisland, another shambles in which the outcome was determined from the beginning. Firstly, the organising committee, made up of SF, IRSP and Relatives, included in the "Standing Orders" of the meeting a ruling that no leaflets or newspapers should be distributed or sold until after the conference. The IWG and PD, arriving at the conference half an hour before it began, quite correctly proceeded to sell and distribute their literature, including our resolutions for the participants to consider and evaluate for the oncoming debate. The committee announced to the meeting that the leaflets should be confiscated and the papers handed back - before they had even put their "standing orders" to the meeting. Both IWG and PD argued that the ruling was a violation of elementary democratic freedoms and an affront to the prisoners' cause and republicanism; that as standing orders had not yet been accepted the Committee had absolutely no authority for its action. (Indeed, the very concept of proposing such a ban is a complete negation of the claim of the organisers to offer an open platform.)

Leading members of Sinn Fein told IWG members that we would be stopped one way or another, that we should cease distributing leaflets or else.

The IWG take this to mean a physical threat. We therefore demand of Sinn Fein to explain their actions and threats before the Irish working class. How is the cause of defending democratic rights in Ireland aided by methods worthy of the very worst trade union bureaucrats?

The IWG, supported by PD, moved an emergency motion calling for the right of anyone to distribute leaflets etc. This right, the IWG pointed out, was also the right of delegates to have before them the information, ideas and texts of resolutions which would ensure

greater participation and democracy at the conference. The Provisional Sinn Féin and IRSP opposed this motion, with the IRSP "socialists" arguing that "left-wing groups" (sic) wanted to make H-Blocks a "party-political issue"! The motion was defeated. True as always to their opportunism, the motley collection of maverick socialists from Eamonn McCann to the Workers Resource Centre uttered not a word to defend the democratic rights of the conference participants.

The arguments against the motion set the tone for the whole conference. The rest of the agenda was, like Coalisland, divided up into a 1½ hour session of speeches from relatives, reading of letters from the prisoners in H-Block and Armagh, a "discussion" period of 1½ hours, and finally, at the end of the day, the resolutions. The IWG put forward a procedural motion calling for a suspension of the 1½ hour "discussion" period in favour of devoting the 3 hours afternoon period to debating the resolutions, and the elections on the basis of this debate. We argued that the best and most effective discussion is when it is focussed on and by resolutions where real differences are clearly expressed and proposals made definite. PD and SWT (SWG) voted with the Provisionals and IRSP against this motion. Thus only after three-and-a-half hours did the conference arrive at what was its real point - to hammer out a strategy. Immediately the truth of the IWG's warnings about the suppression of leaflets containing resolutions was proven. For, the committee decided to number them from 1 to 12, putting SF resolutions on strategy as no. 1 and the IWG resolution on strategy as no. 11. As we argued, this meant that as nobody knew what no. 11 contained, no. 1 was likely to be carried, thus no. 11 would automatically fall, being on the same question. The chair ruled our objections out of order! - on a fundamental point of democracy at the meeting. As few of the participants had seen the resolutions, the majority were oblivious of the issue and the chairperson made certain that they would remain so.

Inevitably, SF's motion, read out by Gerry Adams, was passed overwhelmingly. Only the IWG opposed it!

The substance of that motion revealed that the Provos have acknowledged that the campaign by the RAC is failing. However, instead of asking why, Adams went on to say that as it was incapable of being built locally it would have to be built nationally and internationally. The "broad committee" proposed by him open to humanitarian individuals, liberals etc., would, he said, be the way to achieve these aims. Adams never stated how if you couldn't build a genuine and permanent campaign in the heartlands of Belfast, Derry, Newry, Strabane etc., how a paper national and international perspective would fare any better. The real meaning of the Provisionals' turn to such a broad committee is, as the IWG have argued above, a direct consequence of the kind of campaign led by the RACs. That campaign has strengthened the drift into moralism and humanitarianism and it was no accident that not only were the leading members of the Peace People at the conference, but in reply to the Provisionals' attacks on them, received sympathetic applause for McKeown's appeal for "unity" on the issue. The Provos cannot see that it is they and the IRSP who are, with their manipulative bureaucratic methods, paving the way for destroying the whole political basis of the H-Block protest. With such methods and the 'support' it may get from worthy liberals here and abroad, it might just win some kind of reform - but the price will be paid for by destruction of the struggle as a whole.

With the passing of the Provisionals SF motion, the others, including those from the PD about a "NewYears Day march" and a protest at the SDLP conference, were of little significance. PD, in effect, have had their broad front committee accepted. It poses no alternative based on the working class. It is this basic agreement on overall strategy that enabled PD to get two members onto the eventual national committee, clumsily elected by show of hands half way through the taking of motions.

The action of Kieran Allen, leading member of the SWT in the SLP and NEC member of the SLP, in voting against our motion while himself proposing a motion for a workers-based united front - in essence the same as the IWG's, was sectarian hypocrisy. Allen had previously in the crucial votes leading to our expulsion from the SLP actually abstained last March on a motion to prevent the SLP ditching its public commitment to the Political Status demand! His comrade, Paul O'Brien, on July 11th at PD's Public meeting in Dublin, authoritatively stated, and repeated with emphasis, on behalf of the SWT that it is not the position of the SWT (repeat not) that the working class should be brought to the lead of the national struggle. And, in the words of their leading member Brian Trench, the significance of the National question is that it "impinges on the socialist movement". Thus their line at the Green Briar was simply a hypocritical workerist left-opportunism that rejects the need for workers to play the leading role while at the same time it mutter's empty appeals to the working class.

The IWG believe that the committee elected with SF, IRSP, PD, relatives, a priest, two lawyers and a schoolteacher is not fundamentally a redirection of the H-Block struggle. With no priority for orientation to the organised working class, apart from the use of the odd T.U. bureaucrat willing to say a little but do nothing, the committee can only offer the same series of marches and rallies which have already charted a course towards powerlessness and passivity for the participants.

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-

IWG MOTIONS AT GREEN BRIAR CONFERENCE (on redirection and new cttee)

* That this conference accepts the need for a redirection of the campaign to defend and win political status. That this must involve a recognition of the indispensable and key role that the anti-unionist working class and Southern working class can and must play in this struggle. Therefore we call upon conference to undertake the building of local United Fronts committees open not only to anti unionist workers and trade unionists but also all the political social and cultural forces of the anti-unionist population.

* In order that the perspective of worker-based united front committees can be effectively put into action, we call upon this conference to appoint an AD HOC committee of one delegate from all the political and social and cultural bodies represented, including the relatives action committees; that this committee be instructed through the bodies it represents to encourage the building of committees in every locality throughout the North and South if possible. That the Ad Hoc Committee after three months convene another conference from the members of the local committees set up to both hammer out a programme of action and elect a genuine democratically accountable leadership.

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-

REPLY TO THE REPUBLICAN SOCIALIST TENDENCY (P. D.) FORMERLY IN THE SLP

In July of this year the Peoples Democracy trumpeted the news that the "Republican Socialist Tendency" had left the SLP to join it. The RST statement and interview in "Socialist Republic" devote much of their steam to a defensive re-writing of the SLP's career, in the course of which the RST/PD repeat the lies and slanders which were their frequent resort when confronted with our criticisms. A full treatment of the SLP's record is given in Class Struggle No. 5. A few replies and comments on PD's July statements are in order here.

PD put members into the SLP (strictly, MSR did, and then fused with PD), had them pose as RST a year later and brought them out to rejoin PD ceremoniously with precious little gains to show. Why did MSR/PD not openly avail of the rights of tendency in the SLP? Wasn't that surely the best way to fight clearly for their programme and take up the battle for revolutionary socialist regroupment in a growing leftward-moving current in which all the Trotskyist groups were active? At the RST/PD public meeting on July 11th the PD claimed they hadn't wanted to "polarise" the SLP! We ask - what do revolutionaries expect to do by arguing for their programme, or any key aspect of it, in an organisation of left-ward moving militants, a hardened reformist leadership and centrist and revolutionary activists if not to polarise debate and allegiances? What PD are admitting is that they had no intention of arguing for revolutionary socialist answers to the questions raised at every point in the SLP - on repression, the anti-imperialist struggle, women's rights including abortion, the rank and file struggle against the bosses offensive etc. They ducked the elementary duty of any revolutionary in such a Party! Even where they claim to have taken a clear anti-imperialist line they nevertheless didn't want to stand over it to the point of precipitating what we knew and proved to be an inevitable point of make-or-break for the SLP. Their trailing opportunist "niceness" didn't prevent them ending up outside the SLP's doors either, but it disarmed them of any means of winning serious militants to openly argued principled revolutionary positions and action.

If the PD/RST believe, as they claim, that the National struggle was the focal issue for revolutionary socialists in the SLP, why did they neither build or join SLP branches in the Six Counties as we did with scarcer resources? They refused three times to answer this key question at their public meeting.

Repeatedly the PD goes on about the IWG turning the SLP into an abstract debating forum. We repeat again that the evidence of our record of active intervention in all areas of Party work is well documented not only in the Spark bulletin of the workers tendency we initiated in the SLP, but well attested e.g. in the statement of our arch-enemy SLP President Neligan in which he publicly drew attention to our activism in the Party paper. The PD members earned exactly the opposite reputation in the SLP.

PD/RST repeatedly accused IWG of making support for abortion a condition of campaigning for Contraception rights. That is a lie. We made every possible effort to explain the correct tactical united-front approach to the two issues - Contraception the immediate focus of mobilisation, unconditional on any fight for abortion, and for revolutionaries (and the SLP after we won the position) the duty to always preserve the right to argue for need for abortion on demand so as to identify the potential basis for a campaign on this issue. Our position was stated at length in the SLP internal bulletin (long after the Editorial Committee had refused us publication in the paper). We were active on contraception, not in CAP, but not sectarianly against this feminist alliance. We advertised SLP's participation in the CAP Rally and got a PD/CAP speaker invited to a meeting in Galway - an invitation declined by them. Meanwhile, PD tried to stop abortion being debated at SLP Conference, and to that end voted against it in branches! Not so in the open conference however when they sensed the wind of a near $\frac{2}{3}$ majority which carried our position as Party policy. Nevertheless PD/RST's S. Shovelin went on a TV Irish-Language programme attacking the Party's re-affirmation of this position later. At the SLP Election-policy conference it was PD's Betty Purcell who proposed that abortion should not be mentioned in the manifesto!

Now, the PD's position is being changed because some of their own feminist allies are criticising their timid conservatism - in our view their treacherous abandonment of what they say they stand for, their centrist adaptation to the unfavourable social climate. Their October "Socialist Republic" states (last col, last page):

"It is increasingly clear that the debate on how we fight for the right to abortion in our own country should now begin" - tagged on to a feature on the British labour movement opposition to the Corrie Bill restricting abortion. Why only now? Why not two years ago in the SLP? Why not five years ago when we were battling for this position in the SWM?

PD members, acting since Jan. '79 as the Republican Socialist Tendency in the SLP did not fight against our expulsion from the SLP despite claiming to fully support our stand in demanding public commitment by the SLP to its formal stand on H-Block. True, SWT acted as direct agents of the reformists in putting us out of meeting after meeting, but RST sat silently on in the meetings after we'd gone, in the interests of unity.

Their manner of leaving the SLP was the final disgraceful episode in PD's intervention in the SLP. At a moment when the Party Conference (plenary) had been summoned at last after the crisis period, when the H-Block and expulsion questions could have been effectively raised - and we had sympathisers willing to do so but isolated - the RST arrived to distribute their "resignation leaflet" outside the door! Not only did they pass up an opportunity to defend IWG and the principle for which we were expelled, but they did not dare to voice their own criticisms of a Party they felt they could no longer belong to, from its own rostrum, to its own members. To have done so was an elementary duty if they had, as they claim, principled differences with that rotten coalition of centrists and reformists.

FIGHT FOR LABOUR MOVEMENT INDEPENDENCE OF RELIGION

British Imperialist oppression of the Irish nation over the centuries ensured that Ireland had a weak and divided bourgeoisie. As the struggle for national freedom reached a peak (1919-20) and the threat loomed of workers and small farmers going beyond bourgeois limits, the frightened and divided bourgeoisie reached out to do a deal with imperialism. The outcome was the Partition of Ireland into two capitalist sectarian states in which the Catholic and Protestant Churches came to play key roles in offsetting the weakness of the ruling class. The social power of the churches became the very cement binding the majority of workers in the 6 Counties and the 26 Counties to the two anti-democratic states into which they were divided by Partition.

For this reason, the fight to establish the Labour Movement's independence of religion and against the Church's encroachments had to be a key part of the programme of revolutionary socialists. This fight would inevitably have to be built round concrete struggles aimed at resisting the encroachments of the Churches on the independence of the Labour Movement and going on from that to fight for complete separation of Church and State in schools, colleges, health, youth organisation, civil institutions etc. etc. North and South.

Therefore, the IWG looked on the Pope's visit as an event which would be used to tie the working class to the Papal chariot wherever possible. Contrary to the expectations of many socialists, but not of the IWG, the massive turnout of the Irish working class to greet the most explicitly reactionary Pope since Pius XII, revealed the deep-seated hold of clericalism in Ireland - a grip intensified by the many-sided crises of social, political and personal life facing the Irish masses. In the absence of the only historically adequate answer - a revolutionary and internationalist workers-based movement - Marx's dictum that religion is the opium of the people, the heart of a heartless world, was never more relevant.

BISHOP CASEY AND THE GALWAY TRADES COUNCIL

The need to defend the Labour Movement's independence of religion became immediately obvious when Bishop Casey of Galway got the Executive of the Trades Council to agree to official participation in organising the Papal Mass for Youth on Sept. 30th. The Trades Council Executive Committee voted to participate and steward the Mass. A challenge to this decision was led by a member of the IWG at the Council's general meeting on August 30th, but the delegates voted 22 against 12 (with 4 abstentions) to participate.

Bishop Casey could have got hundreds of stewards at the drop of a hat but he knew the political importance of tying the Galway trade unions to the apron strings of the Church. He made a bee-line for the Trades Council. No doubt he knew that success in this would strengthen his chances of "mediating" in future strikes etc. to divert workers from winning their claims, as his colleague Bishop Newman did in weaning the workers of Ferenka out of their factory-occupation.

Having forced the members of "Sinn Fein the Workers Party" (SFWP) to vote with the IWG position, their leading representative in Galway and chairman of the Trades Council joined in a motion of censure by the Executive on the member of the IWG for taking up the issue

among the local workers. IWG issued a leaflet to local factories pointing out the treachery of the Trades Council, showing that its decision threatened the basic trade union principle of keeping the unions open to all workers, irrespective of creed or lack of creed. The leaflet asked union branches, committees and workplaces to dissociate themselves from the decision. The IWG nationally contacted other trades councils and Left groups with the same call. Of the three groups who turned up to a meeting called by IWG in Dublin on Labour Movement Independence of Religion, none of the self-styled trotskyst groups nor the Labour Party or SFWP were represented.

Because the vice-president of the Trades Council, Peter Kenny, who is also Chairman of Galway Labour Party, supported the Bishop's invitation, the IWG wrote to all the Galway L.P. branches, head office and the Constituency Council asking for motions of repudiation of Kenny's sectarian position. None of them issued any statement although our letters provoked heated debate. Because the Militant tendency - a reformist self-styled trotskyst grouping in the L.P. had members in the Galway Labour Party, we asked them for a meeting, but they never acknowledged our letter. Even when national journals, Hibernia and Republican News carried our call, Militant remained mum. Obviously they thought it more important not to spoil their vote-catching alliance with the Party bureaucracy than to defend working-class independence of religion, despite all their bluff about their fight in the North against "sectarianism".

SFWP, too, forever sounds-off about the worker-killing monster of sectarianism. Events, however have shown their stand to be a hollow hypocritical and opportunist cover for attacking the anti-imperialist fighters in the North. Their election-candidate, Tony Coffey, chairman of the Trades Council, supported the Executive resolution censuring the IWG member in the council for revealing the facts to the Galway working class. His action was just as despicable as that of the SFWP steward in a Dublin factory who joined the ITGWU bureaucrats in witch-hunting members of the NO. 13 Branch Committee who had publicly opposed the giving of gifts to the Pope by the Union. These actions of SFWP members are an exact expression of the SFWP's crass opportunism nationally, for, that Party issued nationally a revolting declaration on the Pope's visit, "TO HIM WE SAY WELCOME".

We challenge the Militant group to say why they refused to reply to IWG's letter, why they refused joint action against the sectarian decision of the Trades Council, and why they took no public stand.

We challenge SFWP to explain how Coffey's refusal to fight the matter openly and his support for a censure on our member, and how SFWP's position nationally can be reconciled with their claim to be "fighting sectarianism".

We challenge the centrists, SWT, PD, LWR and the SLP, to explain why they took no independent action and refused to acknowledge the invitation to a joint meeting on the issue of Galway Trades Council and the general question of Labour Movement independence of religion!

TEACHERS UNION OF IRELAND AND THE COMMUNITY

SCHOOLS DEEDS OF TRUST

At the crucial "Community Schools" conference of the TUI on Oct. 13th the IWG was the only Left group to leaflet on this issue of extending Church control of education. The leaflet outlined concrete action that the Conference delegates should take to defeat the attempt to withdraw objections to the school Deeds, and said:

"It is important to see why the TUI bureaucracy act in the sectarian way we have witnessed in their conduct of the Deeds negotiations. The Churches, North and South, are pillars of the two sectarian capitalist states into which Ireland and the Irish working class has been partitioned by British imperialism in the interests of world capitalism. The TUI Bureaucracy have not refused to fight these sectarian deeds of trust because they are weak and spineless individuals. The key reason for their refusal is their deep acceptance of the status quo imposed by imperialism - an acceptance which they share with the Irish bourgeoisie and the Churches!"

The TUI leaders know well that what is involved in the Deeds of Trust debate touches a contradiction at the heart of the two confessional states in Ireland (imposed by imperialism in 1922). A savage fight by the union leadership was therefore to be expected, using every hatchet method.

Firstly, they tried to restrict the ballot to only Community School teachers, a small minority of the Union. Union president Jim Dorney and his cronies played on the elitist feelings of some community schools teachers with the argument "withdraw the objections or you'll all end up as tech teachers". This weapon was torn from Dorney's hand at the TUI Annual Congress in April when the delegates voted for a Special Delegate Conference on the issue. Despite this, the union bureaucrats still fought at the October Conference to restrict the ballot to Community Schools, about 600 members, judging that this would guarantee a YES vote.

Next, the Executive majority got the General Secretary, C. Devine, to issue directives convening the conference on the basis of only allowing one substantive motion - that of the Executive in favour of withdrawal of the objections, allowing branches only to amend it. Then the officers withheld correspondence from the Standing Orders committee containing resolutions and amendments when time was critical to their being admissible.

In a disgraceful episode in trade union affairs, the National Executive forced its members to support the withdrawal of objections to these sectarian Catholic Deeds or else "resign". On this basis, Ray O'Neill, the only Protestant in the Executive, was expelled from that body because he would not be whipped into supporting the Executive majority line at the Conference called to decide the issue.

Finally, the TUI leaders would not allow certain motions to come before the Conference even when the Standing Orders Committee recommended them. Thus the Union President usurped the functions properly given to the Standing Orders Committee.

For the TUI bureaucracy, their role as credible brokers between the rank and file teachers and the 26-County Rome-Rule State was at stake. That's why the hatchet was unsheathed in the Union as never before. Had they been forced to allow a democratic and decisive Conference with all duly submitted motions allowed on the order paper, and with the content of the Deeds of Trust as the centre of the debate, they could have suffered a major defeat. It was a setback for them, nevertheless, that the Conference forced them to submit to a ballot (by 120 votes to 84).

The number of votes against the Executive in the decision to allow the 5,000 members in Vocational, Comprehensive and Community schools to ballot, would have been larger but for the sympathy won by Devine and co. in reaction to the tactics of the League for a Workers Republic member Paddy Healy. Rather than fighting the bureaucracy's denial of democratic rights in the Conference, or relying on the effect of clear arguments on the good instincts of the delegates, Healy took the disgraceful short-cut of an opportunist. He sent a solicitor's letter to Devine threatening him with a High Court injunction to prevent the Conference occurring.

Devine claimed, correctly, that this was bringing the Courts in to arbitrate on internal union issues and thus making them judges of good order in the union. He then went on to frighten delegates by claiming that Court action would threaten the Union funds. Healy's behaviour would be condemned by any ordinary good trade unionist. From a so-called trotskyist it is nothing short of criminal. In any case it let Devine off the hook and alienated a lot of delegates from the Left.

We call on the LWR, Irish section of the OCRFI, to either defend Healy's behaviour in public or dissociate themselves from it!

The IWG proposed a meeting after Congress to lay the basis of a 'Vote No' Committee. The LWR dismissed this as unnecessarily 'formal'. The Socialist Labour Party dismissed it and proposed getting some City TUI Branches to issue a leaflet. There is no evidence that this was done, and it would have ignored the national scope of the issue. The SLP-initiated 'Teachers Action Alliance' (TAA) should have been a natural nucleus of a national 'Vote NO' Committee. However, the bankruptcy of its leadership can be seen from the fact that at the Conference they issued no leaflet on the actual issue but instead prepared a pamphlet with the abstract call for unity of the 3 teacher unions. This perspective led the TAA to adopt a defeatist attitude when the Deeds battle was reaching its peak. What this shows especially is the further degeneration of the politics of the SWT, the "brains" in the SLP behind the TAA.

Despite this, the support in action and finance of a body of TUI members made it possible to realise an IWG initiative in forming an ad hoc committee to leaflet every major Vocational school in the 26 Counties.

The results of the ballot published on Nov. 13th shows that the possibility of defeating the Executive in this major issue of extending Church control of education and control of hiring and firing of teachers, was within the grasp of a serious campaigning committee, for the Executive only carried the vote by 1,706 to 1146. Thus over 40% abstained, a crucial stratum for such a committee to have aimed at.

The lesson to be learned is that the building of a rank and file movement among teachers is now all the more urgent, to fight for workers democracy in their trade unions, to transform them into organisations of struggle on a programme of direct action in the workplaces to make the Church's gains unworkable!

UNION BUREAUCRACY DISPLAYS ITS CATHOLIC SECTARIANISM

On the eve of the Pope's visit the leadership of the largest Irish union, ITGWU, breathed a sigh of relief for the opportunity to at last remove the giant slogans atop its skyscraper office block which had urged workers to 'Sign the Tax Petition' as a means of diverting them from any repeat of the half-million strong protest stoppages and marches on March 20th. The excuse for closing their 'petition' campaign and removing the slogans was to make way for new giant slogans welcoming Pope John Paul II in Irish and English. In addition, the leadership of this most effete of union bureaucracies presented the Pope's nuncio with chalices and vestments for the Vatican repositories, costing more than would have financed a significant strike of one of its sections.

The Branch Committee of the No. 13 Branch must be applauded for its action in publicly announcing its resolution attacking the papal gift-giving by the union which starved No. 13 members in Telecommunications Ltd. by isolating them on unofficial strike, removing the Branch president and denying the most elementary right of branch committee members to meet during the strike.

The bureaucracy responded by organising petitions selectively so as to produce for the evening newspapers a trumped up story of how the workers spontaneously rejected the decision of the No. 13 committee, ably assisted by at least one SFWP shop steward. The Committee members responded and succeeded in reversing the petition results in several places. A witch-hunt whispering campaign of slander against the Committee members was engineered by union officials. For circulating a factory leaflet in his own defence, one of the Committee was threatened with the sack.

F.W.U.I.'S PAPAL FLAG

The No. 15 Branch of the second largest union, FWUI, passed a motion calling on the Union President not to allow the Papal flag to be flown from union offices. The motion, put forward by an IWG supporter called on the union not to associate itself with any organised religion. The Union President and officers Foster, Cardiff & co., eager to display that their primary loyalty was to the Church and the shoneen Republic, went ahead with displaying the Vatican flag and the national tricolour from union headquarters.

A brief look-around at city union offices revealed the following observations on union sectarian allegiance to the Catholic Church.

- LGPSU offices flew one Papal flag.
- ASTMS/Labour Party building had no display.
- Psychiatric Nurses/Municipal employees - one national tricolour.
- UCATT - one Papal flag.
- National Busworkers Union - no display.
- Post Office Workers Union - Papal displays in four windows.
- NATE - a Papal and one other flag.
- Bakery & Foodworkers Amalgated - bunting and Papal flag.
- Irish Graphical Society - Papal window pictures and national flag.
- Federation of musicians - no display.
- Irish Women Workers Union - no display.
- AGEMOU - papal flag. ATGWU - no display.

SFWP's weekly mass paper carried an advertisement for an l.p. record of the Pope's speeches! They welcomed the Pope "critically" - they say - by expressing regrets about the undue cost of the visit! KEEP THE UNIONS OPEN TO WORKERS OF ALL CREEDS AND NONE! FIGHT NOW IN EVERY UNION AND IN CONGRESS FOR EXPLICIT RULES FORBIDDING ASSOCIATION WITH ANY RELIGION BY THE UNIONS!

NUCLEAR POWER — 39 FOR A LABOUR MOVEMENT FIGHT TO DECIDE!

The decision by the Irish Government to establish a nuclear power plant at Carnsore has triggered off a campaign of protest which, as in many other parts of the world, where the issue has produced growing fears among millions of workers and their families, raises for revolutionary Marxists the need to examine basic questions of socialist principle, strategy and tactics in order to relate correctly to the issue of nuclear power in Ireland and internationally.

Unless Marxists take a stand on the issue in accordance with fundamental principles, there is the real danger that the working class will find itself behind a barrier and behind a movement which is not only anti-socialist but anti-industry and technology. Already it is clear that the "Anti-Nuke" movement here and elsewhere is contaminated by the ideas, arguments and methods of action of zero-growth environmentalists, ecologists and conservationists whose beliefs, if ever realised in a world of 4,000 millions, would condemn mankind to a form of barbaric poverty worse than the Middle Ages. However, there is little chance that international capitalism will permit these purveyors of crackpot ideas and their anarchist hangers-on much practical influence in the choices facing mankind on the question of energy. Their real danger to the working class and socialists is the role their ideas may play in a period of recession in facilitating the capitalist class in gaining acceptance among workers for their austerity programmes of belt-tightening and cuts needed by capitalists to maintain profit. The fact that in many of the European capitalist countries and significantly in America, sections of the bourgeoisie have joined the anti-nuke "movement" should warn the Irish Left that a movement unclear in its analysis and demands regarding nuclear power will end up actually strengthening the capitalist system, which is at the root of the problems, by enabling it to turn genuine concern about the hazards of nuclear power into anti-working-class measures.

In Ireland in particular, this is a real danger. For, in a country where the unsolved national question remains within a deeply divided working class in two semi-backward economies; and where agricultural production and rural life predominate, various forms of ideology from nationalism to religion venerate and perpetuate a vision of Ireland as a 'small' island bravely resisting "foreign" and "alien" ways of life. Even the historically genuinely healthy products of Irish culture - its language and music - are pressed into service by the Irish bourgeois and petit bourgeois to do duty in maintaining this mist of reaction in these ideas. The recent visit of the Pope should have illustrated the enormous power of reaction these ideologies and images still have over Irish masses when mobilised into action by the Irish clergy in the service of clerical obscurantism and superstition.

It is a measure of the bankruptcy of the so-called Left (Marxist

and Republican) that the politically dominant organisation within the anti-nuclear movement here has remained the small semi-anarchist libertarian Revolutionary Struggle group. The reason is simple - the Left have uncritically accepted the arguments against nuclear power in principle and from there have gone on to abandon the class struggle of workers and the Marxist theory of the state in order to join forces with the liberals and reactionaries who flood the movement.

The fact is that the issue of nuclear power is not as simple as either the anarchists or R.S. or the centrists of Peoples Democracy and Socialist Workers Tendency would have us believe. First, the central idea of socialism for Marxists is based on development of all the productive forces of modern technology, on science, on mass production, so that the material necessities of life are automatically available in abundance to all and not to a tiny minority as in all class societies. On the basis of the most extensive development of the productive and technological forces in all countries, a planned socialist world of workers states would alone offer mankind for the first time in its history the freedom from the daily struggle to survive and the opportunity to enjoy the experience of truly creative and co-operative labour - the essence of all human freedom.

Therefore, those socialists in the SLP, SWT, PD etc. who base arguments against nuclear power on the fact that "our" energy needs in Ireland "are not really as high as the Government states" are in fact not only making a virtue out of the massive economic, social and cultural backwardness here (with all the human suffering it entails), but they also are joining actively with the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois propagandists in Church and State in disarming workers' resistance and their struggle for better wages and conditions, improved social and welfare services, shorter hours, full employment, women's right to work etc. Likewise those 'socialists' such as Brian Trench of the SWT writing articles and broad-casting on how "we" can conserve "our" energy.

As a principle, socialists cannot attempt to hold back technological and scientific developments within capitalism which objectively increase the all-round growth on a world scale of the forces of production and which as a consequence makes easier the fight for, such developments sharpen the contradictions between the socially organised nature of mass production and technology and its still privately owned character under capitalism.

Therefore, whatever our feelings about nuclear power, it cannot be opposed by socialists on the basis, as the Left do, of arguing that it is a "job-cutting" technology. For, these arguments - incidentally the views held by the early working-class Luddites opposed to the first machines being employed by the bosses - lead the working class to oppose technology and not the real enemy - capitalist relations of production and profit. Again, the "four green fields" mentality is strengthened and the working class disarmed before the employers and the state.

It is the duty of socialists to argue that any introduction of new technology must not be at the expense of workers - the only producers of society's wealth. Nuclear power, like the emergence of all new technology, raises therefore the concrete question of who controls industry and why and all our efforts must go into raising in the working class everywhere the demands for worksharing with no loss

of wages; cutting the working week to 35 hours to absorb the unemployed, jobs for all displaced workers, as key demands in a strategy for workers' control of the nuclear power industry. The issue of secrecy in the nuclear power industry is connected to this class-struggle perspective.

The Irish Left argue that secrecy in the nuclear industry is a reason for rejecting the whole industry. Their arguments are purely moralistic and utopian, offering no guide to action by the working class. The fact is that in capitalist society as a whole science and technology and the process of production are all shrouded in secrecy and mystique with information in the hands of technocratic and scientific elites. Therefore, as in all industries and state bodies where workers are constantly denied access to information crucial to their lives the demand must be for an end to secrecy; for open access and control by the trade union rank and file on all matters of safety and the dangers of nuclear power. Here the issue is raised concretely as part of the class struggle and seeks to mobilise all workers in support for these demands. They, if successfully taken up by the working class, as part of a fighting programme, lead inexorably to a struggle for state power and the dismantling of the physical apparatus of the capitalist state machine - for only in a Workers State can real decisions about nuclear power as a safe technology or not be effectively worked out. Without this perspective all attempts to oppose nuclear power in general while perhaps succeeding in closing down the most hazardous plants (which of course they must be!) can only mean the working class paying the price of the temporary inconvenience to capitalism through increased exploitation, cutbacks, three-day weeks, power-shortages, unemployment etc.

WORKERS CONTROL

The Left, on the other hand, claim to see in the IWG perspective "a fantastic pessimism" which amounts to saying "let them build the plants now and then we will begin the battle for workers control" (- Molly O'Duffy, SWT's Review Jan '79, p.24). Nowhere in the IWG article reviewed by O'Duffy is there a statement supporting any such weird interpretation. First, as internationalists, the IWG believe that we have to relate to the issue of nuclear power internationally, that is, where already nuclear power plants exist and are integral to world capitalist survival plans. Are O'Duffy and her SWT cronies against workers in these plants beginning a fight for the demands we have outlined? Is she against other workers joining in solidarity with them? Already workers' action has taken place in several nuclear plants in England and France both over wages and conditions and safety issues. It isn't enough, of course, but it is not we who are the pessimists but O'Duffy, who goes on to argue that...

"The possibilities of successfully waging such struggle (for workers control of safety, information etc.) are not even considered. The likelihood is slight of building workers' consciousness in an industry where workers are screened before employment, constantly spied on at the workplace, denied access to information normally available to trade union negotiators for collective bargaining, denied the right to strike and where collective* rights are more limited than those of any other workers." (p. 27) (*and individual)

Here we have the full logic of the utopian nonsense peddled by the anti-nuke movement - the complete abandoning of the nuclear power workers to their fate as backward helots incapable of understanding or acting in their own interest. What could reveal more the degeneration of the so-called trotskyists of the SWT than this pathetic and cowardly piece of handwringing. So much for other workers poorly organised or the un-unionised, the unemployed or women if this is the method of socialists. O'Duffy is prepared to leave the workers in the nuclear power industry and the real and difficult struggle to mobilise them and their fellow rank and file brothers and sisters in the trade union movement, and to substitute the delusion of leadership provided by a motley collection of liberals in a "movement" which itself admits is organisationally a shambles.

Comrade O'Duffy cannot even understand that, the fact which she states correctly, that the capitalist state is intrinsically bound up with the nuclear power industry, makes the task of exposing the links concretely between them simpler for socialists and militants! But the SWT and the PD, while claiming that they accept the need to turn the campaign into an anti-capitalist one and base it on the working class, content themselves with passively tagging abstract propaganda about capitalism and socialism onto the 'pressure group' politics and methods of the anti-nuke movement.

At Carnsore, we do not, as O'Duffy alleges, believe that the working class and socialists should wait until it is built before we fight for workers' control - such an idea is ludicrous. On the contrary, the IWG fight now for a trade union enquiry under rank and file inspection into all aspects of nuclear power at the proposed Carnsore site. Furthermore, if as we anticipate, the "public enquiry" (demanded by the anti-nuke movement including SWT, PD etc) permits Carnsore to go ahead, we will continue to fight for the key demands outlined in this article.

NUCLEAR POWER, SAFETY AND ALTERNATIVE ENERGY

The IWG have been accused of being pro-nuclear and therefore oblivious of the dangers of this form of energy for mankind. We reject both of these allegations completely. We hold that the question of the real danger involved in the production of nuclear energy cannot be separated from the methods of the class struggle and the fight to bring the nuclear power industry, like all industry, under workers' control. This logically means for socialists a fight to destroy the capitalist state and replace it with a system of workers councils based on the armed dictatorship of the working class.

We believe that the issue of waste disposal constitutes a second major problem with nuclear power. At the moment it is abundantly clear that capitalism is prepared to go on taking risks with the lives of millions, lying into their teeth about the real effects. The Harrisburg incident in the US shows how far the lies go to conceal the truth. But again, we do not abandon the methods of the class struggle and the fight for a workers' led inquiry, for workers control of safety, and for direct action to achieve all our goals. Waste disposal is equally an industry employing workers. The fight for the most rigorous system of workers' inspection at every stage of storage, transport, processing, and workers' insistence on the best possible technical means of monitoring the long-term dumps.

are already at this moment urgent tasks for the working class - tasks which cannot be cancelled out by opposing new plants.

It is possible that socialists might reasonably conclude on certain evidence that a vastly enlarged nuclear industry now being proposed might pose an unacceptable danger to the species arising from inherent technical limitations. Therefore, it is possible that a fight for a class-independent workers-based inquiry could lead to the demand for a moratorium on Carnsore and other new plants throughout the world. Such a campaign, and such a conclusion, however, by its very methods as one part of the class struggle would have raised concretely the possibility of achieving the only political basis for providing adequate alternative sources of energy, i.e. the workers' state.

For, it can only be in a workers state, with science and technology fully democratised, that a true and final assessment can be made by workers themselves whether the risks are too great or that it can indeed answer efficiently and safely the energy needs of socialist mankind. Any other perspective is a utopian diversion into moralism and reformist illusions about capitalism and the capitalist state.

This can best be seen with regard to the whole issue of the energy crisis and the alternative forms of energy argued for by the environmentalists and their socialist hangers-on. First, there is an energy crisis facing mankind, one not only associated with cutbacks in oil supplies by the Arab and Iranian states in the Middle East. There is a dwindling of supplies of fossil fuels which, by the end of the century at present growth rates in the need for energy, could face industrial society as a whole with a fuel shortage which like nuclear war could mean a collapse into primitivism and barbarism (not to mention the contradiction that environmentalists are already opposing any massive increase in coal-burning). Widespread famine and hunger are objective possibilities of a failure to solve the energy crisis. It is this fact that has pushed governments ahead with nuclear power despite the dangers of which they are well aware. But also because of these dangers and the expense involved in nuclear production, Governments too have begun to invest in exploring other forms of energy production. It may well be that other alternatives will be found but so far, few of the projects look capable of generating the enormous quantity future society, and particularly Socialist society, would require. It is here that the utopian phantasies abound. For, having correctly understood that because of 'their sole concern with profit, capitalism (just as in the search and exploitation of more fossil fuels in hitherto unexplored regions including the deep-sea bed) is limited in its ability to search for alternative energy sources, they then argue that it is possible to force capitalism to abandon nuclear power and begin to use other forms of energy. (See PD's "Nuclear Danger - a Socialist Analysis"). It is precisely here that the real nature of the relationship between the energy industries and capitalism and the capitalist state is concealed, and consequently the illusions in reformist 'tinkering' are most poisonously effective in misleading.

What is absolutely clear is that socialists can neither ignore the energy crisis, induced as it is by capitalist social relations, or the necessity of recognising that nuclear power, if rendered safe through the class action of workers, may be the one technology capable of solving the present crisis. We have no belief that this can or will be done under capitalism and therefore all strategy must lead in struggle to the clear and unequivocal need for workers power in Ireland and internationally as the condition for a real decision.

Any other perspective which serves up poverty and backwardness in the guise of a 'nuclear-free' Ireland or which gives the bosses a license to make the working class suffer cuts to ease their crisis of profits, must be rejected wholeheartedly by the Irish working class. FIGHT FOR:

TRADE UNION CONTROL OVER NUCLEAR SAFETY AND JOB SECURITY

SHUT DOWN ALL PLANTS THAT INFRINGE THE WORKERS' NORMS OF SAFETY

AGAINST ANY NO-STRIKE PLEDGE IN NUCLEAR PLANTS

EXPROPRIATE AND NATIONALISE THE ENERGY INDUSTRY UNDER WORKERS CONTROL

FOR A TRADE UNION ENQUIRY INTO CARNORE

FOR A WORKERS STATE TO DECIDE THE NUCLEAR ISSUE

ITALY —

CRISIS OF REVOLUTION- ARY LEADERSHIP

45

Italy is one of the weaker links in European capitalism and the recent international recession and instability has been particularly sharp there. But, in the face of this crisis for capitalism serious problems and obstacles continue to stifle every spontaneous effort by workers to defend their gains and ward off the bosses' offensive. Two major phenomena dominate the Italian scene - the Italian 'Communist Party' (PCI) and the far-left organisations which are wide-ranging in political perspective and form a larger milieu than the far left of other European countries.

Whereas the Communist Party has by now a long record of betrayal to its name the political responses from the far left have failed as yet to forge a significant revolutionary Trotskyist party capable of intervening consistently on the basis of a worked-out programme, strategy and tactics. Organisations have sprung up in the last ten years, grown phenomenally and come to grief equally spectacularly.

It is our firm belief that without such a growing Party fighting on the wage front, the anti-repression front and for the democratic rights of women and focussing all such interventions around the struggle for workers' power, the Italian working class will suffer great setbacks and defeats.

Most of the political phenomena now being faced by the Italian working class have historic parallels in Italy itself, most notably in the upheavals of 1919-20 which were betrayed by the Italian Socialist Party of that period which gave birth to the Communist Party in 1921. The defeats of this period and the victory of fascism serve to remind us of the urgency of excavating the lessons and applying them creatively to the present period of struggle.

ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY TO-DAY

The PCI is to-day the largest party based on the working class in Italy. It retains the affiliation of the majority of unionised workers and in the 1976 elections it won over 34% of the votes. But it is a reformist, i.e. bourgeois, party in its programme and in the last decade, under Berlinguer, it has pursued a policy of seeking coalition with the Christian Democratic Party (DC), a policy expressed as the doctrine of the "Historic Compromise". As yet Berlinguer has failed to convince the Italian ruling class that he can be relied upon to suppress the workers' movement. This, however is not for want of effort on his part. At a verbal level he has affirmed his commitment to the maintenance of NATO, the U.S. organised military alliance of Western Europe set up as an assault force against Moscow-aligned Eastern Europe.

The PCI leaders drew in their horns on the question of divorce and abortion even in the face of huge marches and demonstrations in

1975 and '76 in order to appease the ecclesiastical allies of the ruling class. During the '76-'79 period of Christian Democrat government the Communist Party acted as an instrument for containing working class aspirations. In 1977, to ease the implementation of a major rationalisation of Italian capitalism by the Christian Democrats the PCI issued a "Medium-Term Economic Plan", the keynote of which was:

"Austerity is an unavoidable necessity if we are to deal with the present economic difficulties. There is no alternative to it."

The loyal opposition of the PCI is not rhetorical either. In Bologna in the spring of 1977 the PCI-controlled municipal government unleashed the military police on a major demonstration against youth unemployment. It resulted in one death, hundreds injured, hundreds arrested and many subjected to beatings in the local police stations. In 1978 the PCI backed the efforts of the Christian Democrats to extend the repressive 'Legge Reale' of 1975 for another term. The PCI leaders actively supported the wave of reaction over the Aldo Moro kidnap and assassination. In April of this year the prosecutor, in a wave of arrests of leaders of the Autonomist Workers (Autonomia) and of Professor Toni Negri, was none other than Calogero, a member of the PCI.

But even this is not enough to convince the Italian bosses to let the PCI into government one moment before they really have to. This is because of the expectations which the rank and file Communist Party workers still have in their leaders - expectations which they believe a PCI government can satisfy. In addition the formal commitment of Berlinguer to NATO is not shared by the PCI rank and file. Despite Berlinguer's occasional criticisms of the Soviet Union, aimed to appease the qualms of Carter and his Italian allies, the worker membership of the PCI takes seriously the view that the USSR is 'socialist' and therefore an ally not to be attacked. Ironically it is a fact that the PCI workers are more concerned than their leaders about political repression of workers in the Soviet Union. It is significant that following the fall in electoral support for the PCI this year Berlinguer was in Moscow having his stalinist credentials refurbished, this time to bolster his credibility among his own rank and file.

HISTORICAL ROOTS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S LINE

It is necessary to look at the history of the PCI, firstly to understand the genesis of the present line and secondly to elaborate the method which revolutionaries must use in concretely tackling the PCI treachery and uniting the proletariat to take the road of class independence and revolutionary action in the period ahead.

In the aftermath of the first inter-imperialist war the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) was supported by the majority of the working class and by all of the most class conscious workers. It had retained this support because, unlike the German Social Democracy, the Italian socialists took an anti-war position. Its position, however, was not that of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, for while Lenin sought successfully to turn the war into a struggle for workers power, Turati and Serrati (the Italian Socialist Party leaders) were against the war but afraid to lead a workers struggle for state power. In the autumn of 1920 a wave of strikes and factory occupations was accompanied by peasant revolts and the seizure of land. Because of the hopeless wavering of the PSI leaders the vanguard of

the workers were outmanoeuvred, isolated and selectively coerced. In the period 1919-20 soviets also emerged but the PSI leaders had no strategy for them. The left wing of the PSI around Bordiga and Gramsci, young and inexperienced though they were, sought to put the party on a revolutionary course. Gramsci promoted the soviets, and Bordiga, the more prominent figure at the time, crystallised around him a sizeable minority in the party. Bordiga had advocated abstention from Parliament and, though he stood corrected by Lenin on this question, his tactical inflexibility would soon lead him into disastrous sectarian mistakes. During 1920 the Communist International advised Bordiga to do everything possible to win the whole rank and file of the Socialists to his side. He failed to do this firstly because he underestimated the hold of the reformist and centrist leaders and, worse still, not having understood the specific character of fascism, not believing that it could come to power, believing that by 1920 the reaction was complete, he grossly underestimated the need for a united front as a means not only of defeating fascism but also of overcoming the major obstacle of reformism in the struggle for power.

At the Livorno conference of the PSI in January 1921 the left wing and Young Communists broke away to form the Italian Communist Party but failed to win a majority. Even after that, Bordiga and Gramsci failed to pursue the Comintern's (Third / Communist International) policy of the united front with the Socialist Party, believing instead that the 'correct' ideas would suffice to displace the PSI altogether. The election in May 1921, however, while it saw a slight decline in the PSI vote, gave a mere 15 seats to the new Communist Party, while the fascists, also contesting for the first time (though by no means relying on parliament), won 35 seats. While Bordiga chided Lenin for advocating "compromises" the lumpen-proletarian Fascist bands were pushing up the stakes - on the streets, and winning ever more support among wavering elements, becoming a credible "compromise" for the big landowners and industrialists. The bosses were growing nervous of the ability of the Liberal/Catholic coalition to rule on the basis of only the standing army and police. The only chance the PCI had of turning the tide resided in persistent calls to joint action with the PSI workers, but for the 'purists' Bordiga and Gramsci, the thought of working alongside centrists and reformists overshadowed the purpose of the tactic, i.e. to unshackle the PSI rank and file from their leaders and bring them into direct action against the fascists and the direct struggle for power.

With the PCI in a minority, with the sectarian attitude of Bordiga and Gramsci towards the united front policy and the consequent confusion in the working class, the path to power was considerably eased for the Fascists. By the end of 1922 Mussolini had installed himself in Rome with no resistance from any section of the ruling class. In the conditions of semi-legality which continued until the consolidation of the fascists in 1925-26, the PCI experienced bitter factional disputes. Gramsci, who had followed Bordiga until then, now began to grope towards the United Front perspective of a transitional struggle to break workers from the reformist PSI leaders and unite the proletariat of the industrial North with the peasants in the South. Bordiga became increasingly isolated and retreated to his position of electoral abstention in the 1924 elections. Gramsci won the leadership of the party in 1924, allied with the centre group of Togliatti and the right, under Tasca. At this time the party numbered some 25,000 but in the following year the fascists,

to the surprise of Gramsci, who least underestimated their potential, cracked down on all democratic rights and instigated a rout against the whole labour and trade union movement and all factory organisation. The PCI leaders were gaoled, Gramsci permanently until his death in 1935. Togliatti was released and became the delegate to the Comintern for what was now a considerably smaller PCI organisation.

In the context of the past decade, the lessons of this period are important. Most of those involved in the Italian far left have come through the experience of disillusion with the Communist Party which to-day is a far cry from the young and subjectively revolutionary cadre party that it was in the early '20s. To-day, however, the Italian far left is plagued by most of the errors of the young Bordiga and even worse mistakes. Not alone has it yet to apply consistently the united front tactic to the PCI and the not insubstantial PSI of to-day, but it is characterised by chronic instability, by a growing unwillingness to work in reactionary trade unions, the failure to orientate to the organised working class on all fronts - economic struggles, anti-repression struggles, the defence against fascist nuclei, for women's emancipation, - and by an inability to unite the most advanced workers with the more backward strata. This situation cannot be ended without an intransigent struggle by Marxists on the basis of a programme for workers power and in terms of which, strategy and tactics are developed scientifically and tested by consistent intervention and debate.

THE PCI FROM 1925 TO 1948

The problems of political perspective within the young PCI which had been mainly the product of inexperience now gave way increasingly to the effects of political degeneration in the Comintern. Since the death of Lenin the Russian Communist Party became increasingly subject to the reactionary stalinist programme of Socialism in a single country. This reverberated throughout the Comintern by increasingly subordinating the struggles of the international working class to the sole end of defending the interests of the Soviet Union and its bureaucracy. Stalin pursued a policy of peaceful co-existence with Imperialism through selective alliances with imperialist bourgeois classes. In 1927-28, through Togliatti, this was translated into a policy of a 'popular revolution' in Italy, aimed not at the unification of the Italian working class in its own struggle for workers' power but at the establishment of a "Republican Assembly". This implied the political subordination of the proletariat to a programme of "bourgeois revolution" - a perspective that Stalin had applied with disastrous consequences to the Chinese revolution the previous year. In 1929 yet another turn, a left turn this time by Stalin, (the so-called Third Period) led to an ultra-left adventurist policy being promoted in Italy. Whereas the '27-'28 period saw the united front abandoned from the right; now it was abandoned from the left. But the counter-revolutionary effects of this policy in Italy and elsewhere (most notably in dividing the German working class in the face of Nazism) led to a more entrenched popular-frontism throughout the Comintern from 1933. Worse still the action of Stalin in supplying oil to Mussolini for his imperialist war on Ethiopia in the mid-'30s served to further corrupt the PCI and to demoralise the Italian working class. The limited perspective of achieving "normal" bourgeois democracy led to the stifling of every effort to develop working class independence in defence against fascism's offensive.

When opportunities for an offensive against Mussolini opened up it meant stopping short of the smashing up of the bourgeois state. Such opportunities were not only opened up by the second World War but the Communist Party, to be consistent with Bolsheviks and the left-wing of the Socialist Party in the First World War, should have adopted a policy for the defeat of the Italian bourgeoisie in whose interests the fascists fought and for the conversion of the war into a civil war against Italian capitalism. This programme would have demanded complete independence from the bourgeoisie.

Instead, the CPI after the Stalin-Hitler Pact condemned the war as an imperialist one and then reverted to defending the war as anti-fascist following the invasion of Russia by Hitler. This led inevitably to the emergence of the Popular Front as an all-class armed resistance movement whose goal was to merely restore bourgeois democracy. Despite the fact that the most consistent and heroic component in the resistance movement was the growing number of rank and file communist and socialist party workers, the PSI and PCI leaders in particular were intent on restraining the class from forcing the conflict to the level of a struggle for state power and socialism. As the war ended and the fascists in Italy were defeated, this was the obvious step for a revolutionary marxist party. Instead, the PCI and PSI leaders collaborated with the bourgeois Christian Democrats and the bourgeois Radicals in disarming the proletariat and small peasants in exchange for positions in an 'emergency' coalition National Government. This government was the logical outcome of the Popular Frontist perspectives of the PCI. Under Fascism its counter-revolutionary consequences were not to be seen so clearly. Now, however, there was the spectacle of "communists" disarming their own "Garibaldi Brigades" in the interests of the bosses. The analysis made by Trotsky in 1930 when he was fighting to reform the PCI programme rings true like a prophecy:

"The enthronement of fascism resulted from the fact that the 1920 proletarian revolution was not carried through to its completion. Only a proletarian revolution can overturn fascism. It should not be fated to triumph this time either (owing to the weakness of the Communist Party, manoeuvres and betrayals of the social democrats, the Freemasons and the Catholics)...
...the (antifascist) Concentration is preparing to arrest this movement, to paralyse it and thwart it in order to pass off the victory of the renovated counterrevolution as a supposed victory of a democratic bourgeois revolution."

-Writings, 1930, p.224

This time, however, the role of traitor fell chiefly to Togliatti and the PCI leadership. In the course of the life of the National government (from 1944 to '47) the Christian Democrats implicated the PCI and PSI leaders in the repression of those workers who refused to lay down arms and in the bourgeois economic policy of 'National Reconstruction' which left two million unemployed by 1948. By 1947 the Christian Democrats were, with the help of Marshall Aid, in a position to cut across the PCI programme of petit-bourgeois economic nationalism and have the PCI ejected from Government. The Christian Democrats wasted no time in bringing Italy into NATO and consolidated themselves in power for the coming decades.

Thus, the present prostration of the PCI leadership before anti-working class assaults by the Italian bosses is only the sequel to a half century of political degeneration. "Eurocommunism", and the "historic Compromise", represent the stage of stalinist senility, rather than a break with stalinism. In tradition and programme Berlinguer and co. are tied to Moscow. It is the increased tempo of the class struggle in Italy (beginning in the hot summer of 1969) and internationally that makes them go through their various political contortions. But how adequate has the response of the forces to the left of the PCI been?

The last decade has witnessed the sharp testing-out of the numerous 'new left' organisations and factions which broke away from the PCI in the late sixties and early seventies. Against this background the record of the self-proclaimed 'trotskyists' of the Gruppi Comunisti Rivoluzionari (GCR), italian section of the USFI (United Secretariat of the Fourth International), must be critically evaluated. From being the largest organisation to the left of the PCI in the mid-sixties the GCR has failed to make any inroads into these new formations and has all but dissolved completely into what is now optimistically hailed as "The Movement".

The most significant new organisations to emerge at the end of the 1960s were the Pd'UP (Party of Proletarian Unity for communism), the Avanguardia Operaia (AO - Workers Vanguard) and Lotta Continua (LC - The Struggle Continues). The so-called Movimento (movement) was a more recent development. It is the product of disillusion with the failure of the organised 'far left' to counter the PCI/PSI treachery. Far from being a step forward, it manifests most of the worst traits of ultra-leftism and anarchist nihilism side by side with pacifist moralism. It has neither a consistent record nor roots in the revolutionary Marxist tradition.

THE GCR AND THE LEFT REFORMISM OF THE PDUP

The Pd'UP was founded in 1970 following the expulsion of a dissenting section of the PCI central committee. Claiming to oppose the Historic Compromise it merely looked to Togliatti (of Popular Frontist fame) as its political mentor. The basic perspective of the Pd'UP has been to win a parliamentary toe-hold that would enable it to influence the PCI in parliament. To this end it embarked on electoral propaganda blocs in the elections of 1972, 1976, and '79. The 1976 initiative "Democrazia Proletaria" drew into it the AO, LC and the GCR. While one could understand participation in such an opportunist ensemble on the part of Lotta and Avanguardia, the GCR "trotskyists" clearly forgot their principles and revealed an incomprehension of how to concretely apply the method of the united front to elections. Muting all their criticisms of the blatantly reformist Pd'UP (which only two months prior to the elections sold -out its small base in the metalmechanics union FLM on a wage contract) they adopted the role of left advisors in the rotten bloc instead of spelling out clearly the need for and the elements of a programme of a Workers Government as a key perspective of the revolutionary Trotskyist programme to mobilise the class. Only on this basis could they have related meaningfully to the rank and file of the major reformist parties, PCI and PSI. Indeed, only insofar as Pd'UP had a base in the working class could critical support be given to it by revolutionary marxists - the support of the hangman's rope for reformist leaders.

However, the GCR, instead of standing out independently on this basis, chose the path of a 'debate' inside the Democrazia Proletaria bloc whilst putting its dwindling resources in the hands of the dominant forces of this muddled formation. Even then they failed to grasp the essential purpose of the Workers and Small Farmers Government slogan, namely, to break the working class from their left and right-wing reformist leaders on the basis of revolutionary joint action combined with placing revolutionary socialist demands on the PCI and PSI leaderships. The size of their forces was no excuse. On the contrary it made all the more necessary a clearly defined and politically intransigent propaganda effort.

AVANGUARDIA OPERAIA

Whereas the Pd'UP were left-reformist in leadership and programme from the outset and had clearly not broken from mainstream stalinist theories, the Avanguardia Operaia, emerging in '68-'69, drew some inspiration from the so-called Cultural Revolution in China, adopted a militant posture and oriented to rank and file workers. At first they were marred by ultra-leftism, substituting the utopian project of building new unions instead of taking up the fight against the reformist bureaucracies in the existing organisations. But, once they got over this, they became more like the IS (now SWP) group in Britain - and by the same token its economic sister group in Ireland, the SWM, arguing for a simple 'more militancy' on the wages front. It amounted to tailing the working class while its economic militancy was in the ascent. They naively believed that this would be enough to pose political tasks and 'obvious' revolutionary solutions. Like the IS they underestimated the hold of reformist and stalinist ideas within the working class. Like Bordiga of old they failed to apply united front tactics among the reformist workers and their organisations. In addition their narrow conception of the class struggle left them outside the arena of the wages battle, emptyhanded. They certainly did not attempt to develop strategy and tactics on women's oppression, youth and students and anti-repression work from the point of view of the major programmatic objective, that of putting the working class on a war-footing aimed at smashing the bosses' State. Therefore, as wage militancy was muzzled by the Communist Party trade union bureaucrats in the mid-'70s, the ground was swept from under AO which responded by lurching rightward into electoral opportunism and sought, through the bloc with the Pd'UP, to merge the two forces. It was the dismal outcome of the 1976 election for AO in particular that confirmed their failure to tackle the PCI. In the following period, both Pd'UP and AO split, the minorities of each joining the other majority. The electoral bloc was kept in existence as both rightward-moving groups tried to stem their serious decline in membership. The kind of lessons drawn by these members can be deduced from the fact that those who did not drift into the "Movement" ended up in the Communist Party.

THE COLLAPSE OF LOTTA CONTINUA

While the left reformists of the Pd'UP and the centrist Avanguardia derived some stability from their orientation to the organised proletariat, Lotta Continua was never more than a barometer of the unstable radicalised students, sections of the unemployed youth, the radical petit-bourgeois women's movement and sections of the Southern proletariat.

Founded in 1968, Lotta Continua grew extremely rapidly on the basis of the Turin events in 1969. Somewhat taken in by the appearances of the 'Cultural Revolution', Lotta lacked any grounding in a serious programmatic tradition and, dominated by philistine and cultish leaders, its eclecticism was such that crisis was only a matter of time. It was even more ultra-left than Avanguardia, dismissing the factory councils as instruments of the PCI against the working class. This kind of 'leftism' reflected a complete ignorance of any dialectical method and was a signal for avoiding the battle against PCI reformism in the strongest sections of the proletariat, in favour of tailing the more "radical" strata.

The lack of a concrete programme became clear in relation to the women question in 1975. On Dec. 6th, Lotta's 'heavy squad' invaded a women only march in which 30,000 were demanding the legalisation of abortion. There followed a major internal row with the women comrades threatening to resign. Only the illusion that Lotta's prospects for the coming June elections were good served to postpone an open rift. Shattered by the election results, the crisis re-opened with a vengeance at the Rimini Congress in Nov. '76. The leadership were ignored as the feminist women organised 'women only' sessions while groups of workers did likewise. The following months witnessed the complete disintegration of Lotta as an organisation. All that was left was the group of full-timers and their newspaper. The various components broke off into the 'movement' during 1977.

Before dealing with the Movement we must state clearly that the root problem in Lotta was the absence of a consistent revolutionary Trotskyist method or indeed any conception of what a programme is and how absolutely integral it is to the life of a Leninist party. But we fear that the lessons drawn by those who have now dissolved into the Movement were just the opposite. Both the feminists and the more backward and spontaneist elements imputed the crisis in LC to organisational factors such as 'hierarchalism' and the separation of the 'personal' and 'political' aspects of life. The organisation was highly bureaucratised because its leadership, barren of a firm political orientation, chose to balance as long as possible on a host of divergent and opposed tendencies. Democratic centralism was never a reality in Lotta. Yet the very concepts of party and programme have now been rejected by the ex-Lotta members as a result of their negative experience.

THE MOVEMENT - A PRODUCT OF POLITICAL FAILURE BY CENTRIST LEFT

The year 1976 was a watershed for all organisations to the left of the major reformist parties, PSI and PCI. The Pd'UP lost members to the PCI. Avanguardia lost members to the PCI and the 'loose far left' when their simple recipe of 'more militancy' caved in amid an orgy of electoral opportunism in the 1976 elections. Lotta Continua disintegrated into the so-called Movement after all its internal political contradictions came into the open in the same year.

This turn of events reflected a hardening of the divisions between the reformist workers and other strata of the working class - the migrant jobless workers from the South, the unemployed youth and the isolation of the radicalised student movement from the working class. But it was also a sign of the bankruptcy of the far left groups in a period of opportunities for the application of Trotskyist tactics against the grain of reformist currents and sectional divisions. Having failed to win the ear of the organised reformist

workers in the previous period they are now out of favour with their own previous supporters and have led them to conclude that parties and programmes are only a con and are outmoded.

The Movement is in fact a criss-crossing of many movements and campaigns. It includes strains of radical feminism without any understanding of the class basis of women's oppression and notable for its outright hostility to revolutionary socialism. It includes sections of unemployed youth, school-leavers and graduates, who, however combative, are lacking in the elementary experience of trade union struggles not to speak of revolutionary class consciousness. It includes students indignant with the rising level of repression, censorship and authoritarianism, but inconsistent in their response to it and lacking confidence in the power and interest of the working class, which alone can provide the basis, through direct action, of a solution.

In addition, the Movement has drawn into it various organised political formations and disillusioned leftists looking for new solutions. The most important organisation among these is Autonomia Operaia (Workers Autonomy). Far from representing a step forward from the mistakes of the previous left groupings, however, Autonomia has simply embraced a form of anarchist voluntarism. This is clothed over in a haze of pseudo-sophisticated rhetoric which passes for analysis (- compare the Revolutionary Struggle group in Ireland). Autonomia 'rejects' trade unions and 'institutionalised' politics and operates on the basis of the simple formula of intervening in various ongoing struggles with the aim of making them more militant and as provocative as possible. Once-off campaigns are seen as stunts whose success depends not in the least upon the clarity of leadership and the aims and direction of the protests but only on the boldness of the actions. Partial struggles are pretentiously elevated to the level of conscious assaults on the bourgeois State. Bland and empty slogans such as "take the struggle into the heart of the State" are substituted for clear and sharp class methods and goals. Despite the demagogy about the independence of the working class and 'autonomism', these anarchists not only have abandoned the fight to break workers from the bourgeois politics of the PCI misleaders but they display a contempt for democratic norms within the movement itself. At one of the major congresses against repression held in Bologna in Sept. '77, attended by some thousands of students and workers from the PCI itself bewildered by their leaders' turn that spring, they displayed this puerile attitude in such catchcries as: "there is no democracy in the country, there can be none in the movement!" Not surprisingly the congress was marred by a series of fist fights, a fine spectacle at an anti-repression congress of a 'united movement'.

AUTONOMY'S NEW ANALYSIS AND ITS POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES

The IWG sees the root cause of the political fragmentation of the Italian left in the failure in most favourable circumstances to apply creatively the tactics necessary to break the objectively strong but subjectively confused reformist workers from their leaders. We see it as ignorance, incomprehension or betrayal of Marxism as the scientific guide to working class action in its fight for state power, a science which reached its highest point of elaboration and application in the period from the Bolsheviks under Lenin and the development of Trotsky's Transitional Programme.

The role of the Party, the tactic of the United Front, the concept of a working-class based women's movement, the ability and inalienable interest of the proletariat, unique to it, in championing democratic rights of individuals, women, nationalities etc., were developed on the basis of a rigorous understanding of the epoch of world capitalist decay - the epoch of imperialism. In each period, despite the need for more elaborate analysis and tactical flexibility, these perspectives can be abandoned only at the cost of political defeats.

The "Autonomists" (and their Irish confreres in Revolutionary Struggle) think differently however. Sergio Bologna, Toni Negri and Scalzoni have found a 'new' theory which dispenses with problems arising from political opportunism and sectarianism. The "new analysis" runs approximately as follows: the Italian bosses have discovered that the proletariat is at its most lethal when it is concentrated in large factories. Therefore they conspired to "restructure" Italian capital in such a manner as to substitute for the concentrated working class a dispersed working class in smaller factories. To supplement this they enlist the aid of highly paid technicians who will operate the computerised technology necessary for the manipulation of the atomised working masses. But despite this conspiracy of the bosses and their success in neutralising the "conventional" proletariat and "conventional" methods of struggle, the bosses have given birth to a new phenomenon, namely the "socialised worker" (sic). This, according to the RS group in Ireland, includes 'all those who fight for the immediate satisfaction of their needs such as the unemployed, women, the young and of course, the factory workers working in the new type of small to medium type of factories as satellites of the multi-nationals' ('Italy, state terror and proletarian counter power', p.12).

In actual fact this "new analysis" is nothing more than a set of rationalisations for Autonomia's own opportunism. If capitalism could be restructured in such a drastic manner at the whim of the bosses we would have to throw Marxist political economy out the window as indeed Autonomia have done. This fantastic scenario serves to justify their assertion that every partial initiative by the weakly organised strata in which Autonomia operates is in fact a conscious political blow against the state. It is also a rationalisation of their complete inability to come to terms with the mass of reformist-dominated organised workers who, contrary to the Autonomists' assertions do fight for their immediate interests and have a vital interest in the expropriation of capital in Italy and internationally.

The consequence of their politics has been to isolate and demoralise the movements in which they work, to lead one struggle after another to failure, to feed the reformist illusions of the PCI workers who can see in the movement no prospective alternative to Berlinguer and co. Each defeat for the movement has pushed more and more activists into the nihilistic activities of the NAP ('armed proletarian nuclei') and the Red Brigades. On the other hand the role of force and violence is debased in the eyes of workers and students by the tactics of the Autonomists.

The armed nuclei and the Red Brigades have proved utterly counter-productive in all their actions. They give the state a licence for increased repression without simultaneously offering a method of

REINSTATE JIMMY MACKEN 55

defending the masses against it. They give Berlinguer and Craxi the opportunity to cover up their collaboration with that state with all sorts of excuses about defending society and democracy from subversion. This is all the more unforgivable in view of the extremities to which that collaboration went in the last three years. This year, 1979, has in fact witnessed a new wave of arrests of prominent Autonomists including Toni Negri, not because Negri's "new analysis" has to be nipped in the bud as some of our libertarian anarchists seem to think, but because the movement and Autonomia are running out of steam. Having effectively deserted the working class it is now no surprise that workers do not take decisive action to have Negri and comrades released. It is ironic but no surprise either that so far the solidarity committees in other countries have banked their hopes on Negri's academic virtues and place little stress on his subjective anti-capitalism, however confused it be in our view.

CONCLUSION

These criticisms are not made out of any academic interest nor any sense of petty conceit nor indeed of political despair. The Italian working class needs a clear revolutionary Trotskyist programme for action against its class enemy. Above all it needs a determined cadre party at the helm. We know that such a party can be built, and believing as we do that it must be an international party uniting the workers of all countries on a common programme, we write with undiminished confidence in the potential of the world's workers to liberate themselves and all humanity through revolutionary deeds. But without drawing the lessons of failures and mistakes by the revolutionary left internationally, nothing but a harvest of black reaction will be reaped.

It is as part of this process of discussion, debate and polemic towards revolutionary Trotskyist regroupment that the IWG is engaged in ongoing contact with other currents committed to the same perspective, such as the Revolutionary Marxist Fraction, a tendency with sections in several European countries, its largest being in Italy.

REINSTATE JIMMY MACKEN!

Jimmy Macken, an organising member of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union was refused his job back by McDonalds. Hamburgers in Dublin at the conclusion of a 6-month strike which began with 30 strikers and ended with 8 returning to work having won union recognition from this viciously exploitative and anti-union chain of 5,000 'resaurants' with 150,000 workers worldwide. The Union secured no anti-victimisation clause - and to add to the misery and demoralisation of 6 months of battling with courts, bosses and union officials, strikers who returned were victimised.

Jimmy Macken was refused his job back because the Union had expelled him for refusing to abide by High Court injunctions restricting pickets to an empty token. Instead Macken supported the attempted mass pickets which though they never assumed mass dimensions because of the failure to bring out any sympathetic strikes nevertheless played a key part in the attack on the arrogant McDonalds outfit which flew in American heavies, photographed picketers, and worked hand in glove with Special Branch police in intimidating strikers and supporters.

Backed by the highest echelons of the ITGWU, the No. 4 branch officials hounded Jimmy Macken not only because he stood on a principle and refused to abide by court injunctions on picketing (injunctions made all the more noxious by the explicit offer of branch officials to the Court to restrict picketing to limited hours, no more than three at a time, front entrance only etc.), but also because Macken exposed the actions of officials - in their own words - by publishing a verbatim quote from their affidavit to the Court in which they boasted of their co-operation with police in removing official pickets on days when there was a mass picket.

1 In a detailed open letter to the Union leadership, brother Macken attacked them for undermining the pickets, bowing before Bosses Courts in the most abject manner, denying the strikers any real say in running the strike, disbanding an official union solidarity co-ordinating committee, refusing strike-fund donations, refusing to call out sympathetic stoppages, giving strikers names to the boss and police (admitted publicly in writing and in affidavits), subjecting Macken to kangaroo-court treatment on "charges" of publicising union treachery, and refusing to act against named union officers who physically beat Macken and his brother for giving out leaflets to strike supporters criticising the officials' collaboration of courts and police.

We fully support Jimmy Macken's demand to be re-instated in the Union, and for the Union to force 'Big Mac' to give him back his job. Write to J. Macken at 8 C Lower Gardiner Street or to supporters such as IWG for literature, petitions etc. Send workplace resolutions of support for Macken to ITGWU and him.

BOLSHEVISM VERSUS FEMINISM.

57

REVIEW OF RICHARD STITES' BOOK - "THE WOMENS LIBERATION MOVEMENT IN RUSSIA - FEMINISM, NIHILISM AND BOLSHEVISM."

It was only with the development of capitalism in Russia and the rapid expansion of the working class on the one hand, and the introduction into Russia of Marxist science and agitation by Plekhanov, on the other, that the question of which class could lead to the destruction of Czarism found a clear answer - in his famous slogan that the Russian revolution could only triumph as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin and the Bolsheviks developed this tradition and built a combat party to fight for it. It was then that the woman question for the first time found a full revolutionary communist expansion in theory and practice in Russia and only then was the full depth of the battle between feminism and Bolshevism revealed. It is to these differences that Stites turns after a lengthy and admirable analysis of the 19th Century movement for women's emancipation.

By the year 1900 in Russia the ideas of the German socialist leaders, Bebel and Clara Zetkin, were widely known in Social Democratic circles. Bebel's "Women and Socialism" was circulating the country (abridged) and in 1900 Krupskaya (Lenin's wife) published "The Woman Worker". The proletarian womens movement began to emerge, chiefly under the lead of Alexandra Kollontai and later from abroad Inessa Armand, Krupskaya and the Bolshevik Party leadership. The first stages in this development arose through the fight of Kollontai and others to prevent working women being drawn into the feminist groupings which were showing a massive upsurge at the turn of the century, chiefly around the issue of suffrage.

The feminist movement in the early 19th Century devoted almost all its energies to the question of suffrage and to an all-class alliance of women to further it. By 1900 almost all the original feminists had left the scene and the movement took shape again under Anna Filosofova who founded the Mutual Philanthropic Association. With her associate Anna Shabanova they focussed their entire attention on the growth of the conservative world feminist organisation, the International Council of Women, founded in Chicago in 1893 the aims of which were that womens groups throughout the world should affiliate and communicate on issues specific to women. 'Politics and economics were ignored' - Stites, p 196.

The other two main womens groups were the All Russian Union for Womens Equality founded by liberal women and the Womens Progressive Party which stood politically about midway between the effervescent militance of the Womens Union and the conservative Philanthropic Society and differed from its bourgeois counterparts in the west in that it gave detailed attention to the plight of women workers calling for factory reform, maternity leave etc. The feminists came to be almost all Kadet in their sympathies (i.e. the Constitutional Democrats, the liberal Capitalist Party in Russia). Since they were unable, due to their politics, to work with working women so as to promote their independent class action, many tried to work for them. Again, they focussed on charitable works such as the

setting up of Magdalen homes, student hostels, reform of prostitution etc., but their main objectives in fact only served to slightly improve the lot of the intelligentsia.

The feminists, like their counterparts elsewhere had an "inordinate faith in the power of petitions and spent much of their time and energies gathering signatures" (p. 210). This they did extremely well, but like feminists to this day they pinned their faith on the existing parliamentary structures and it was against this parliamentarianism that women like Kollontai fought most viciously. (An example in Ireland of the weakness of such methods was the placing of the main stress on petitions and signature-gathering by Irish Women United in 1976 on Mary Robinson's Senate Bill.)

By 1907 the Womens Union had collapsed partly due to its lack of a correct leadership and partly a lack of unity among its members. In 1908 Zanaida Mirovich led the union into the International Suffrage Alliance, which was in fact the right wing of womens suffrage, remaining aloof from the organised working class. The "left wing" was 'socialist-feminist' and it was these women who evoked the most vigorous attacks from the Bolsheviks. Kollontai and others fought fiercely against any effort to entice female workers into an all-class alliance of women and away from the Social-Democratic organisations. She came to be called 'that horrible Kollontai'. Attending and hassling the feminists at all their major gatherings, re-iterating again and again that women would not be emancipated except through building a Socialist society in Russia, she was attacked by one irate feminist at a rally in 1906 who declared that "strangling is too good for you" (p. 213). The chances of the feminists influencing working women were much weakened by these attacks. Due to these and the assault from the right wing by 1908 it was almost impossible for the union to hold meetings or reach an audience.

Under the leadership of the Mutual Philanthropic Society the feminists, hoping to revive their former intensity, organised the first All-Russian Womens Congress, only to be attacked again by Kollontai leading a working womens delegation who declared "there could be no separate women question while the general social problem loomed so large on the nation's horizon. Since sharp class differences existed among women, there could be no all-women's movement" (p. 218).

Despite a new journal 'The Women's Cause' and a new organisation, 'The Russian League for Women's Equality', the decline of the feminist movement was inevitable. This League again concentrated on suffrage. After more lobbying, petitioning etc. a petition was again presented to the 3rd Duma. It was consigned to a committee where it still lay when the Duma was dissolved. During the 4th Duma, the whole bill was defeated by 206 votes to 106.

In the meantime by 1905 Father Gapon's Union of Factory Hands counted between 200-500 women members. The massacre of his followers on Bloody Sunday brought a massive upsurge in political awareness. Working women were elected to a committee to investigate the massacre and in the ensuing wave of strikes more and more working women were drawn into the political arena. In Ivanovo-Vosnesensk 11,000 female textile workers took part in a huge strike. Kollontai, herself now a full-time revolutionary due to the events of 1905, saw the importance of attracting such women into the Party. In her fight against

feminism she organised lectures and meetings under such auspices as the Union of Textile Workers and helped to organise a legal club - the Mutual Aid Society for Women. Due to her activities she was forced to flee the country in 1908.

Events such as the founding of International Womens Day and many articles in Pravda on the plight of women workers inspired the Bolsheviks to launch a journal 'Rabotnitsa' (Woman Worker) designed to spread propaganda among women in factories etc. to organise these and the wives of male workers.

At another womens day celebration in 1914 the police made a swoop and many arrests. Rabotnitsa had to be published underground and at this period in all seven editions were circulated.

With the outbreak of the Great War events in Russia began to move swiftly. The feminists gave their full support to the war in the wave of nationalism which swept the country. It is interesting to note that the feminist leader Shabanova again presented the Duma with lists of female workers for the war effort in 1915 as a proof that they now deserved the vote.

In Europe Zetkin, Balabanova and Kollontai were sickened both by the war and the nationalist attitudes of their "socialist" colleagues. Lenin suggested to Inessa Armand and Krupskaya to summon an International Womens Conference at Berne in order to win women to his anti-war (defeatist) line. This took place on 26th May 1915 with about 2 dozen delegates attending and was partially successful in stimulating agitation among women to 'turn the guns against the real enemy'.

Back in Russia hosts of socialist political commissars, Mensheviks, were sent to the war front to counter the Bolsheviks propaganda in mid-1917 (p. 295). At this point, campaigning vigorously against the war as a committed Bolshevik, Kollontai wrote her pamphlet 'Who Needs War?'. Womens battallions, supported by the feminists, emerged to fight in the war and to spread propaganda against the Bolsheviks. In August 1917 there was formed a Women's Military Union which summoned Russia's first 'Women's Military Congress' of which Stites says... "suffused with the spirit of feminism and S.R. style patriotism... the Congress dispersed in an aura of optimism" (p. 299).

The Bolsheviks meantime were making real inroads as organisers and propagandists among women of the urban working classes. At a March 13th Plenum, 1917, of the Petersburg Committee of the Bolshevik Party, Slutskaya proposed the creation of a Bureau of Women Workers and a revival of the defunct Rabotnitsa. This was done and it was published several times a month, distributed at meetings and factory gates and women workers as they were recruited to the Party were sent back into the factories to spread propaganda inside. The movement took the same form as it had in 1905-07; - assault on the feminists and propaganda among the women workers. "When the feminists held an all-Russian Womens Congress in April in Moscow, a delegation led by Inessa repeated the tactics of 1908 and walked out after reading their prepared statements" (p. 303). Brochures such as Kollontai's 'The Working Woman and the Constituent Assembly' continued to be circulated and all this led to the active role played by working women in the October Revolution, women who had come to see the fight against capitalism as synonymous with the fight against the war.

Petrograd washerwomen led a successful strike over bad conditions, applying Bolshevik demands to their own economic needs. When the soldiers' wives pensions ran out and they unsuccessfully petitioned the Provisional Government, a march was arranged to the Tauride Palace, this time their claim was addressed to the Petrograd Soviet. Kollontai helped them to organise informal allotment committees and such committees, growing up around the country, were natural recruitment centres for the Bolshevik women in their assault on the Provisional Government and its feminist supporters. By October there were more Bolshevik women involved in the uprising than there were members of the Womens Battallions of the bourgeoisie. This was the tradition of militancy which set the scene for the valour displayed by Russian women in the Civil War.

On November 12 1917 the Rabotnitsa group set up the first Conference of Working Women of the Petrograd Region - just after the change of power. The purpose of the meeting was to persuade those assembled to vote for the Bolsheviks, and not for the League for Women's Equality, in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. The League speaker, a Dr. Doroshevskaya, argued "men cannot defend our interests - they do not understand us" (p. 307), and Kollontai had to persuade the meeting to hear her out on the need to "know your enemy". By this time universal suffrage had been granted (20th July) with no serious opposition.

During these years, it should be noted that much discussion had been taking place as to the role of women in society. In 1915 Kollontai published her massive study "Society and Maternity" and the demands she raises in this book were "the blueprint of the future welfare programme in Soviet Russia:- 16 weeks fully paid leave, free birth clinics, on-site nursing clinics and breaks.(265). (As in other countries the battle between feminism and revolutionary Marxism became focussed around the question of protective legislation for working women. The Bolshevik Party, supported by working class women and men fought for protective legislation for working women as part of their opposition to any additional exploitation by capitalism. They fought for the extension of such legislation to men as a weapon of working class unity. The feminists on the other hand argued against this perspective.

From pp 258 to 269 the ideas of the future role of the women as seen by Kollontai, Bebel, Marx, Engels and Lenin are briefly discussed.

Stites claims that it was probably the political work of women in the Red Army that had the greatest impact on the outcome of the Civil War. Accustomed to years of propaganda and agitation, they now used these skills to their greatest effect. Women like Kollontai, Krupskaya and Balabanova travelled the country on an agit-train spreading Bolshevik propaganda to working class women throughout the country. Stites asks "How many and what kind of women fought in the Civil War?" (p. 321) and cites a figure of 73,858, for 1920. Here, and also in the massive involvement of working class and peasant women in the war at a non-military level against the Whites, we see the fight of women from the labouring classes reaching its highest peaks and achieving its sharpest pitch against the feudal landlords, the bourgeoisie and their abettors among organised women, the feminists.

With victory in the Civil War achieved, the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Government despite the economic backwardness of Russia and its isolation, devoted massive resources to the battle to lift the burden of child care, domestic drudgery and unwanted pregnancies from the working class and peasant woman, and to give them the chance to become free co-partners of men in the construction of the Socialist order. A good expression of this aspiration is a quote from Kollontai's speech in 1918 "The Family and the Communist State";- (p. 351).

In place of the indissoluble marriage, based on the servitude of women we shall see arise the free union, fortified by the love and the mutual respect of the two members of the workers state, equal in their rights and their obligations. In place of the individual and egotistical family, there will arise a great universal family of workers, in which all the workers, men and women, will be above all workers, comrades".

The main organ for this work was called Zenohtdel - a special co-ordinating organisation responsible to the Soviet Government for leading the crusade for womens emancipation. Stites includes a good and detailed analysis of its work. As his book goes up to 1930, his analysis of the arrest of this process of emancipation, under the Thermidorian reaction centred around Stalin, adds yet another detailed chapter to the history of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism.

Stites' book is available in (limited) paperback edition and hardback, published by Princeton University Press. A book out of the ordinary, it compares in detail the programme and method of fighting of Bolsheviks and Feminists in Russia. In particular it shows how Kollontai, as chief theoretician and activist in the fight for the working class women's movement against feminism in all its forms, has been totally neglected by modern feminists and 'socialist feminists' who selectively and out of context concentrate on those aspects of her work which deal with sexuality and sexual relations, as the major defining point of Kollontai's political life and thus 'include' her as a feminist!

Everyone claiming to be a revolutionary socialist and to be committed to the re-discovery of the methods of Bolshevism on the woman question has a duty to get their hands on this book and study it.

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-C-0-0-0-0-0-0-

With victory in the Civil War achieved, the Bolshevik Party and the Soviet Government despite the economic backwardness of Russia and its isolation, devoted massive resources to the battle to lift the burden of child care, domestic drudgery and unwanted pregnancies from the working class and peasant women, and to give them the chance to become free co-partners of men in the construction of the Socialist order. A good expression of this aspiration is a quote from Kollontai's speech in 1918 "The Family and the Communist State": - (p. 351).

In place of the indissoluble marriage, based on the servitude of women we shall see arise the free union, fortified by the love and the mutual respect of the two members of the workers state, equal in their rights and their obligations. In place of the individual and egoistical family, there will arise a great universal family of workers, in which all the workers, men and women, will be above all workers, comrades."

The main organ for this work was called *Leninist* - a special co-ordinating organization responsible to the Soviet Government for leading the crusade for women's emancipation. Stites includes a good and detailed analysis of its work. As his book goes up to 1930, his analysis of the arrest of this process of emancipation, under the Thermidorian reaction centred around Stalin, adds yet another detailed chapter to the history of the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism.

Stites' book is available in (limited) paperback edition and hardback, published by Princeton University Press. A book out of the ordinary, it compares in detail the programme and method of fighting of Bolsheviks and feminists in Russia. In particular it shows how Kollontai, as chief theoretician and activist in the fight for the working class women's movement against feminism in all its forms, has been totally neglected by modern feminists and 'socialist feminists' who selectively and out of context concentrate on those aspects of her work which deal with sexuality and sexual relations, as the major defining point of Kollontai's political life and thus 'include' her as a feminist!

Everyone claiming to be a revolutionary socialist and to be committed to the re-discovery of the methods of Bolshevism on the women question has a duty to get their hands on this book and study it.

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-